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MY SUDAN YEAR









OUR ATTENDANT NUGGER.

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# MY SUDAN YEAR

BY

E. S. STEVENS

AUTHOR OF

"THE VEIL," "THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD," "THE EARTHEN  
DRUM," "THE LURE," AND "THE LONG ENGAGEMENT"

WITH FORTY ILLUSTRATIONS



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## INTRODUCTION

THE object of this book is a very simple one.

It delivers no new and startling facts or theories about the Sudan ; it may possibly contain erroneous statements or judgments. It is but an attempt to convey to the tourist or fireside traveller something of the interest and charm of the Sudan in an unambitious form. Statistics and Blue Books mean little to most people ; but an account of the passing incidents, trifles, and characteristics which have arrested the attention of an idle traveller may form for them a picture of the country which an enumeration of facts would merely blur. Perhaps the mothers and sisters of Englishmen whose work lies out in the Sudan may find in this book a setting for their thoughts, a coloured background for their imaginings of the lives and doings of those in whom they are interested.

The title was chosen more with a view to the series to which this book is to belong than with regard to actual fact. I have not spent a summer in the Sudan ; few women ever do. The expression “ year ” must be taken, therefore, figuratively.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those who so kindly helped me in collecting information, especially Miss Bewley, Mr. T. W. Sagar, Captain G. S. Symes, D.S.O., Mr. Stanley Dunn, and Mr. K. C. P. Struvé.



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# MY SUDAN YEAR

## CHAPTER I

### GETTING THERE

IT was in the summer of 1910, after my return from Syria, that I first came into indirect contact with the Sudan. In London I chanced to meet some men from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, all in high spirits at being back in England after their yearly exile. One of them showed me a number of Mr. Morhig's excellent photographs of the Sudan, and, while turning these over, I formed a vague desire to visit the land which could exercise such a fascination on these men even while they were rejoicing to leave it. Unmeasured swamps, uncouth beasts, savages who, like Mr. Shaw's wood-stained Britons, considered respectability sufficiently propitiated by a coating of clay and a bead or two: photographs and tales of these stirred the imagination and brought a

breath of adventure into the greyness of a wet London summer. My Englishmen abused the life of course—who ever met the Englishman who did not grumble? They were like boys at a public school home for a holiday; ready to declare they had left a miserable hole; but admitting, nevertheless, that there was nothing like it, and that they could never settle down in England—never, that is to say, until the years should come of which Solomon wrote in his sorrow, that there was no pleasure in them.

But the wish, so casually formed, was, after the manner of casual wishes, suddenly fulfilled. Early in the following winter, I took passage on the comfortable Nord-Deutscher-Lloyd steamer *Prinz Heinrich*, and arrived in Cairo, where I arranged to go south by one of Messrs. Cook's river-craft—those floating palaces which ply between the Northern capital and Assuan, and thence on to Wady Halfa. For no one, if he is not tied for time, should travel by train in Egypt more than is absolutely necessary. The old high-road of Egypt is its river, a highway on which men go down to the sea in feluccas and dahabiyahs after the manner of ages, and white sails are ever spread



like protecting wings over cargoes journeying up and down.

The railway is too abrupt. It jerks you like a hooked minnow from one century into another, it blinds you with dust, it shakes you, it makes your bones ache, it is abominably hot—it precipitates you into burning tropics while you are still blinking from your London fog. The Nile on the other hand bears you gently on its broad bosom in comfort and leisure. The history of ten thousand years unrolls itself before you as you pass village after village, city after city, temple after temple. There is no indecent haste. The very river moves placidly. It has time to mirror the palm groves, the serrated brown houses, the domes and minarets, the funereal comeliness of Philæ, the massive temples of Abu Simbel, the limpid skies at sunrise and sunset. It is a spectacle of such variegated beauty that you are never sated. Moreover, you become gradually acclimatised as you exchange the agreeable coolness of Cairo for the summer of Luxor and the tropical heat of Assuan, and, passing from Assuan into the golden deserts of Nubia, reach the Tropic of Cancer, where the Southern Cross glitters in the sky of nights, and

the wind is dry and fervent and pure from its long sojourn over sunbaked wastes.

And the Nile is the river with more personality than any other in the world. Its very name calls up, like the Witch of Endor, the ghosts of mighty dead, the pageants of buried centuries. It evokes the pomp and circumstance of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, it brings up the shadowy histories of mummied kings and queens; the loves of Antony and Cleopatra, and the happier passion of the great Rameses for slender Nefert-tari, the queen of all his queens; the woman who held his tenderness in the hollow of her little hand till her body was laid to jewelled rest in the barren mountain side at Thebes. The perfume and humanity of these arise fresh as they did thousands of years ago. There are other memories too, for the transports which bore relief to Khartoum passed this way on their futile journey southwards—to arrive too late; and to Halfa on the same waterway came the later vengeance, when Kitchener poured men and railroad makers into the Sudan, that he might fling his battle line forward. These are phantoms that call for thought!

Halfa has changed mightily since the days of

which the late G. W. Steevens wrote in his wonderful book "With Kitchener to Khartoum." Every one who goes to the Sudan reads that book, for it brings the great drama of the annihilation of the Dervish troops before the vision as no other history has ever done. The very clang of the busy hammers and the rattle of the steam engines are in your ears as you read his description of the Halfa of 1898. "Railways run along every dusty street, and trains and trucks clank up and down till Halfa looks for all the world like Chicago in a turban."

There are no engines running loose in the streets now, no cheerful battalions on their way to the front. But in a certain compound of the town aged men sit and sometimes talk of those times. They are the "political prisoners," men who led hosts into battle in the name of the Mahdi, and among them is the great Emir Osman Digna, a white-haired and pleasantly-spoken old gentleman, with much of fallen greatness in his mien.

For the rest, Halfa is a peaceful place enough, with its neat row of European-built houses along the river-front, its mosque and hospital, and a growing native town rather less smelly and dirty



than the average Egyptian town. You wander down the main souk and buy Sudanese beads and curios from an elderly merchant who dozes at a corner shop, and realise that, somehow, there is a different atmosphere about this place. The official seems more alert, more paternal, the native more respectful. It is a subtle something which tells you that you are—at last—in the Sudan.

For most travellers Halfa is merely the memory of a railway station. Outside that station women crouch on their heels with open baskets, in which are exposed for sale such commodities as native loaves of bread, long and flat, biscuit-like rings of *semit* sprinkled with sesame, fat green melons, oranges and knobbly *shammams*. The fourth-class passengers—native of course—buy from these women provisions for the twenty-four hours' journey. Inside, the train is waiting, the white desert train, shuttered down to keep out the blistering sun. The platform for the last half-hour has been a kaleidoscope of colour and life. There is a group of veiled ladies—the household of an Egyptian officer returning south—he himself as modern as army regulations can make him, the

women looking coeval with the Pyramids in their black habbaras and white face-veils. They are bundled hastily into the train. There sits an Arab of patriarchal appearance, surrounded by all his goods; and beside him a good-tempered six-foot-two Sudani, his black face one grin, his cheeks decorated by horizontal gashes to show his tribe. There are plenty of effendis—Egyptian Government clerks and officials in irreproachable tarbushes and black coats. Yonder goes a Scottish engine-driver in dirty khaki in close conference with a black mechanic. Beyond is a cluster that might have dropped from Hurlingham, ladies on their way down, conversing under dainty parasols with some spick-and-span English officials and a subaltern or two returning from leave.

In short, Halfa is a railway station of character, for few people, except tourists, make that twenty-four hours' journey with the idea of spending only three days at the other end. Most of the passengers are preparing for months of work or sport, in surroundings so different from those they left behind in England that they might be preparing to jump over centuries into the Middle Ages. The white desert train is going to provide the transport.

Many of them are purposing to journey yet a thousand miles south to that swampy Garden of Eden in Central Africa where clothes are dispensed with and money is not. They are not going for a week-end, either. Thus it comes about that Wady Halfa Station has an atmosphere of its own.

A horn blows—it sounds like a tin trumpet ; and those who are seeing off, fall back ; those who are departing step inside, and the train moves off.

You find that an electric fan, a berth, a washing basin and soap are provided in each compartment ; and you settle down beside the violet-tinted pane to watch the desert glide past. It is one vast expanse of yellowish brown, varied here and there by a little scrub ; here and there by a few palm trees, and all the way by telegraph wires ; but it is a huge nothingness and barrenness spread out to scorch beneath the tropical sun—to scorch from the moment the huge ball arises on the horizon till it sets in a theatrical blaze, casting long shadows to the east of every stone and boulder, and playing fantastic tricks with the dazzled vision. There is no respite, no cool dew of eve or cover of chasing



clouds; only the sun, emperor and tyrant, set in a pallid sky too fervent to be blue. You tire of it at last—the monotony has nothing to offer you.

It is only after dinner that you realise how beautiful this desert can be. At sundown it flamed like a Mexican opal, but it did not touch your heart. When the train stops to water at Station No. 6, you step out into the coolness of night on to a champaign of faery. The moon sails like a goblin argosy in the sky, and the sand is turned into powdered snow and silver. Acacias, black and delicate against a vault in which the stars have faded before the greater light, brush the lonely station hut set in the waste, and the tall unlovely tank—and mystery walks on the long moonlit horizon.

An English colonel close by is telling some ladies who have just dismounted that, in the days when this was the Sudan Military Railway instead of the Sudan Government Railway, it was here that Kitchener dug for water—and to the surprise of every one found it, and convinced the native that the hand of Allah was with him. His second and third attempts were not so successful, but the

fourth again saw his hope realised and the brave little train refreshed on its way.

Our train has been refreshed too ; the horn sounds, and we get in, this time to bed. The old traveller warns you to cover everything you possess, and in the morning you find that he is right, for in spite of the closed shutter and violet pane, everything is thickly powdered with sand. Your mouth is gritty, the soap scrapes you, your very clothes must be shaken, your black shoes have become white.

Some one mentions baths. Atbara Station is near. You meant to think of the Battle of the Atbara when you arrived at that historical place, but, as a matter of fact, you think only of baths. And you discover a bath worthy of the name, broad and deep and hot—a bath indeed. That half-hour is the happiest of the day. For the rest, the hours crawl on with the thermometer 101 in the shade, and you keep up an interest in life by meals and by an occasional excitement, such as a vision of the squat pyramids of Meroe against the sky-line. Professor Garstang's excavating camp is close by, a cluster of white tents. You consume a great deal of liquid. It is not a tempera-

ture to travel in. The railroad follows the Nile now, and passes brown village after brown village built of sunbaked mud. You sink into a torpor.

At last, late in the afternoon, you cross the broad river, over a brand-new bridge, eighteen hundred feet of it, and see a vision of white houses and green trees, and then of a big railway station with many trucks and signals and rows of brown houses. You have arrived at Khartoum—capital of the Sudan.



## CHAPTER II

### THEN AND NOW

TO get a rough idea of the shape of the Sudan, imagine a large plaice, laid on the map so that its head is at Halfa at the north and its tail at the Lado Enclave at the south—a district of some seventeen thousand square miles which was added to the southern province of Mongalla in 1910. From north to south the Nile forms an irregular backbone, the Blue Nile wandering up from the east to Khartoum, and the main stream, the White Nile, finding its source in Victoria Nyanza through Lado, at the extreme tip of our fish's tail. To the west of the White Nile lies the big province of Kordofan, covering an area larger than Portugal; farther west still Darfur, whose independent Sultan, Ali Dinar, looks with misgiving at the railway recently opened between El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan, and Costi on the river, which makes it possible to perform in twenty-

four hours the journey from Khartoum, which, by river and canal, took formerly twelve days. Ali Dinar may well feel uneasy. This means an iron fist thrust towards his own domain—a territory as big as England.

Below these two and touching the boundaries of each stretches the triangular district of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the region of swamp and malaria. In the north-east corner of our fish lie Halfa Province and then Suakin Province reaching the Red Sea. Then the eastern boundary bends abruptly inwards, and encloses Senaar Province and farther south the Mongalla Province, which, as I have said, comprises the Lado at the tail. This is the roughest description, but it may serve to elucidate the geography of the country for those to whom maps are apt to convey indigestible facts. The total area of the whole Sudan, as Sir Auckland Colvin points out, is well over a million square miles, or about two-thirds of China.

Dividing the fish into three pieces horizontally, Khartoum is situated at the bottom of the first third, just above the point where Blue Nile and White Nile meet. Properly speaking, it lies on

the Blue Nile. Omdurman is on the opposite bank, past the blending of the streams.

It is confusing, by the way, that the Nile flows northward and that "up-stream" means southward. A unique feature of the Nile is that it is self-supporting. It gets broader instead of narrower as it approaches its source, and, proud and generous to the end, carries its largesse to Egypt and the Delta without the help of tributaries.

Khartoum itself has the pert prosperity of a city of recent growth. The hand of Lord Kitchener is visible in its symmetrical plan. Houses seem to be companies and battalions formed into neat squares and ready at a word of command to march further in orderly rows over the desert. The streets are very wide ; there is an indescribable feeling that the town is a camp, that its life is as artificial as the life of a city of tents. And that impression is deepened by the perpetual bugle calls and sounds of military music.

A plan of the town is before me as I write. It is as mathematically divided into squares and diamonds as a wall-paper or as a number of Union Jacks, and is pyramidal in form ; the base, two



miles long, extending along the Blue Nile. On the other side of the river, united by the new railway bridge, is Khartoum North, where the Government dockyard and stores, also a suburb of native houses, are situated.

The most pleasant walk in Khartoum is along the river—Embankment Street is its ridiculous name—with its shady walks of lebbakhs and acacias and gum-trees ; private houses and carefully-tended gardens on one side and the river with Tuti Island to the north-west on the other. Here English nursery-maids bring their charges in the cool hours of the day, along it tourists mounted on donkeys rejoice in the sudden shade and respite from the frizzling heat ; and below the bank lie, sweltering in the sun, the white Government steamers prior to setting forth on their journey southwards, while just above them the sakya creaks its mournful song. A sakya, for those who do not know, is a contrivance for drawing water from the river for irrigating purposes by means of a wheel turned by oxen. The small boy sits behind them, singing or dozing. In the latter case, the oxen, missing his reminders, gradually cease their weary round and drowse too in the

heat of the day. The tune of the sakya may soothe you or may set your teeth on edge. There is a tale of an Englishman who, maddened by the noise, gave a sakya driver oil and backsheesh so that he might be troubled no more. But the owner of the sakya came to him with an injured countenance. "How is it possible," he asked, "for me to know whether the sakya is working or not, now that I cannot hear it?"

The other principal thoroughfare is Victoria Avenue, also planted with trees, but these are as yet in their extreme youth. Just where Victoria Avenue is intersected by Khedive Avenue, stands one of the most important and dramatic monuments of the place—the Gordon Statue. It is seen from four quarters. Troops pass it all day long. It culminates the broad entrance to the Palace Gardens. It is the focus of the town, this simple bronze effigy of a man on a camel. The statue of Gordon Pasha dominates the city, as does his indomitable spirit of patriotism and faithfulness unto death. But a short distance from the statue, Dervish spears were dipped in his blood; but a stone's throw away Kitchener and his staff bared their heads at the retaking of the



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

SMALL GIRLS WASHING CLOTHES AT OMDURMAN.





city, while the funeral service was read over the spot where the martyr fell.

There are many legends about the statue. The natives regard it with awe. One old black woman, who used to be attached to Gordon's household, was said to sit here for hours together because, she said, it sometimes smiled at her. Others declare they have seen it move. An Englishman was once looking at the statue, when a Sudanese who had paused also informed him that the likeness was excellent on the whole, but that "the colour was not right." "I knew him well," said the old man, "and he was as white as you!"

In the Palace Gardens a rose-bush is still cherished that was, it is said, planted by Gordon's hand. In the Palace chapel, his favourite hymn, "Abide with me," is still sung after evensong on Sundays. If ever the spirit of a man walked the scenes of his lifetime, then surely the great and honest spirit of General Gordon stalks about Khartoum.

The day after my arrival in Khartoum happened to be the day on which a garden-party was given at the Palace, "to meet Lord Kitchener." The

present Agent-General of His Majesty's Government in Egypt was then out of employment, and had just returned from a shooting trip on the Blue Nile. Lord Kitchener was, in fact, up in the Sudan after an absence of seven years, for pleasure and not business. Seven years before, Khartoum was scarcely raising her wounded head from the dust after the devastation of Dervish rule, for though much had been done in the five years of Anglo-British administration, that time was mostly taken up with recuperation. Now the Sudan had lived through seven years of healthy growth, and the differences to the eye must have been enormous.

It was the holiday Kitchener that we saw that day of the garden-party, burnt brick-red, smiling, and as cheerful as a schoolboy. His especial wish had been to kill a fine kudu that was known to be in the neighbourhood of Sennaar, and secure the prize he did, within only an hour of the time fixed for his return. He had found leisure too, during his short trip, to open the new bridge at Kosti on the White Nile, to glance at all the improvements in Khartoum, to give lozenge advice to every one of the most practical description, praise to those



who deserved it, and to keep the whole place busy. Such are the methods of the present British Agent !

The Palace Gardens are vastly different now from that wilderness into which Kitchener and his officers walked the day when the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted once more on the roof that Gordon had paced, searching for the help that came too late. Then the Sodom apples ran riot over the beds and lawns, and the Palace was a pitiable ruin. Now the rebuilt edifice presents a bland and imposing face, and there is a carpet of sward before it that might be the lawn in front of the Club House at Ranelagh. The garden is brilliant with red and white oleanders in full bloom, scarlet poinsettias, poincianas, yellow tacoma, sysybans, and glorious torrents of bougainvillea ; and the sward is shaded by mimosa, acacias, broad-leaved fig trees, orange trees and down-drooping banyans.

The dazzling sunshine of this January day made one blink. The flowers provided colour, and so did the crowds on the lawn. I say crowds, because, though the white uniforms of civil officials and the coloured uniforms of army officers were inter-

mingled with light-coloured dresses and parasols, the native contingent, the local sheikhs and leading Khartoum merchants, kept to themselves, and looked like a page torn from the Old Testament.

Lord Kitchener paused to converse with them when he had descended the Palace steps with the Governor-General between rows of coal-black giants in red and white ; and, later on, while every European was crowding into the marquees for tea and ices, I saw one after another detach himself gravely from the throng, kneel down at a little distance from the rest, and repeat his evening prayers, with his face turned Mecca-wards. The sight of those prostrating figures brought the strange incongruities of the function before one as could no other incident during the afternoon.

There were other paradoxes. Those same black giants in white embroidered with red to which I referred just now, the Sirdar's bodyguard, were old soldiers, many of whom must have fought against our troops years ago. And, not so odd perhaps when one considers that the Sudan is chiefly run by Scotchmen nowadays, it amused me to hear the native bands piping forth Scotch airs on Scotch bagpipes, with true Caledonian

zest. The Sudanese are apt musicians. The regimental bands are brass and play in harmony, and no one in Khartoum need ever be ignorant of the latest musical comedy airs—they are played in Khartoum as soon as in London.

The bands were to the fore the next morning at the review which took place in the early hours. That was a sight to which I cannot do justice. All Khartoum and his wife poured out into the desert beyond the town. Omdurman sent its contingent of scallywags too.

On the road to the parade-ground we met dog-carts, motors, horsemen and horsewomen, Egyptian ladies peeping out with veiled faces through the curtains of their carts, high officials on donkeys, and riff-raff on the same or on foot; scantily clad women with naked babies, ragamuffins, functionaries and what not. Above us a cloudless sky, and a sun so powerful that the kites wheeling high up in the pure air cast clean-cut shadows on the scorched sand. And a wide horizon, a vast dun-coloured plain, broken only by a mud village or two, miles away, and a string of telegraph posts marching into the distance like pins stuck into a huge sheet of cardboard. The



troops were there—stretched out in glittering lines, the red and green pennants of the cavalry fluttering out in the brightness like a row of tiny rags. A roped-in enclosure accommodated the ladies with chairs, and beside it stood the motor-car from the Palace. Kitchener paused to speak to its occupants for a few seconds, his horse switching its long tail impatiently, before he cantered away. He was dressed, as some one put it tersely, like a loafer—no spurs, no sword, no gloves. But when he pulled up by those blinking, twinkling lines of miniature men and horses out on the field of sand, and rode down the length of each, one realised that here was the man responsible for this pageant of Empire in a Desert.

The march past brought a strange lump of emotion into one's throat. Many and many a man had faced our guns in that not far-distant past. The 9th and 13th Sudanese number in hundreds dervishes who joined our ranks after the battles of the Atbara and Omdurman. They made brave foes—their smiling faces, brown and black, show that they can be loyal friends. The Sudanese march with a fine swing, and it was impossible to tell their age. Men of fifty looked

as active as boys—and as cheerful. Most, however, were of the younger generation, upright fellows whom any man might be proud to command. Among the native officers the Khalifa's son was pointed out to me. At first it seemed almost horrible that the son of this man above all others should serve his father's destroyers, but after a while one realised that it was a fine thing that, not only had our Government destroyed its enemies, but their enmity also.

It was a sight worth remembering. The cavalry with their pennants; the Arab mounted infantry with their brown and green turbans and dark intelligent faces, mounted on small Abyssinian mules; the Cadets from the Military College; the Camel Corps lurching and swaying forward; the dangerous little Maxims looking so bright and workmanlike; all passed and saluted; and then came the gallop past with a thunder of hoofs, a clatter of wheels and a clanking of bridle chains. The review was over. Once again the glittering lines stood firm, and there was the sound of shouting, the "Effendimiz chok yasha!"

The bands struck up the Khedivial Hymn and the British National Anthem, and the pageant was done.

## CHAPTER III

### DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL KHARTOUM

THROUGH most of the nights of the year it is warm enough to sleep out of doors. In the hot weather you camp out on the roof, where a breeze may perchance fan you, with an earthen pitcher of water within reach. In the so-called cool weather your *angareb* \* is placed in the verandah or garden, and there you lie watching the great stars flickering in a sky of vast clearness, or fireflies spangling the magic of the tropical moon if she is at the full, until you fall asleep. An extra blanket should be at hand, for the night grows chilly just before dawn. You can be awakened by a variety of causes: by the light—always dazzling, by the bugling in the barracks, by a regimental band braying past, or by the

\* A native bed made of leather thongs on a wooden frame. No Sudani is without one, and few Europeans, as it is very comfortable,



strident note of the Sudan bulbul in the tacomas or acacias.

You draw no mosquito curtain about you, for the energy of the medical officers of health has done away with the Khartoum mosquito. More than that—a householder is fined 50 piastres if a mosquito is found on the premises. The mosquito breeds in stagnant water, therefore all stagnant water is treated with paraffin, or removed. In a town like Khartoum, where people used to stand up to their necks in water to be rid of the torment of the stings, this is more than triumph.

It is only a part of the work of the sanitary authorities. Khartoum is one of the healthiest cities in the world, thanks to untiring vigilance.\* The English official makes constant personal inspection himself, however efficient the native subordinate may be. Once there is a case of malaria or enteric, the cause is doggedly hunted down, and usually found. In 1909 there were some cases of malaria in the British Barracks. The Blue Nile was falling at the time, and leaving

\* The death-rate as recorded in the Report for 1910 was 7 per 1,000; or 422 deaths in a population of 60,000 natives and Europeans.

pools in its bed near the Barracks. These pools were examined, the larvæ of anopheline mosquitoes—the species that brings malaria with it—found in them, and they were treated. But as soon as fresh pools were formed, the larvæ made their appearance in them too. The officer of health immediately suspected an irrigated field on the further side of the river, but the native inspector declared that it was innocent. However, a sanitary inspector near the farm himself developed malaria. The medical officer then made a thorough search, and discovered the fatal larvæ in the channels that watered the crops. As soon as they were treated, there were no more cases of malaria.

That is characteristic. An eternal war is waged on the bacillus, a contest as determined as Kitchener's campaign against the Khalifa. This year, rabies appeared at Khartoum, and in experimenting, one doctor got some of the inoculated serum into his eye. It might have cost him his life; he was forced to go down to the Pasteur Institute at Cairo for treatment. Happily, no evil result ensued. Mr. Wellcome, of the firm of Burroughes and Wellcome, has endowed the "Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories" at

the Gordon College, where a war to the death is being waged on the diseases which have made tropical countries too often the grave of the white man. There the idiosyncrasies of the wicked little sleeping-sickness bacillus are being studied as a general studies the idiosyncrasies of the enemy, full reports of the work are published, and incalculable services are being rendered to the science of tropical medicine.

To return to the point from which mosquitoes beguiled us. It is not always warm enough to sleep out of doors. There may be a "cold snap" when the thermometer is actually at 60 degrees Fahrenheit—very cold, that, for the Sudan, and noticeable, owing to the draughty construction of the houses. You may be awakened, nevertheless, by the twittering of birds, for in Khartoum the sparrows make free of the houses, and even build their nests inside. They chirp, and fly in and out of the rooms, or perch on the furniture to look at you with impertinent bright eyes, as if they had a perfect right to be there. The Sudanese sparrow is as cheeky as the English sparrow, and not dissimilar. His plumage is not so dingy, however, and he is smaller. The bulbul to which I



referred further back is one of the most familiar garden birds in Khartoum—he is almost as big as a thrush, grey in colour and black-headed—his notes are loud and cheery, if not very musical.\*

One can drink water with impunity at Khartoum. It is brought from the deep wells at Burri, and is pure and good. In the olden days women carriers and donkeys used to go about with water-skins and paraffin tins full of the precious liquid, but they have been replaced by taps, water-carts, and public drinking fountains, at which vessels may be filled for a small payment.

As for food, it is always possible to get mutton, which is good, beef too, and unlimited chicken, but never veal or pork. The larder can be varied with sand grouse, wild duck or venison on occasions. Fish—Nile fish—is plentiful, but muddy and coarse in flavour. Milk and butter can be obtained from the Government Farm at certain times of the year—both taste unlike English dairy products, but are prized and expensive. Vegetables are not plentiful, and green-stuff is almost precious. It is true that one can buy most of the vegetables

\* See Appendix A.

of the earth in tins at one or other of the Greek stores, and Sudanese cooks are excellent at sauces—in fact, it is sometimes impossible to recognise the dish for the sauce. Curry powder is dear to the Sudanese cook's heart—but it is sometimes put to unholy uses. A certain civilian was back from a successful shooting trip, yet was informed by his cook that there was no meat. "What!" said the civilian. "How about that gazelle?" "Excellency," said the cook, "the gazelle has gone very bad, and I have no curry powder!"

The Sudanese cook is on the whole cleanly, but he has peculiarities. The pig is an unclean animal, and he handles him under protest. One householder discovered his servant spitting devoutly on the accursed ham before bringing it in to breakfast.

Sudanese servants are often Berberines—a tribe born to serve, and serving, on the whole, excellently. But the truth is seldom in them, and the English *sitt* (lady) does not always find her way a smooth one. Everything that goes wrong in the house is attributed to the Devil. Bishop Gwynne told me that one day his "boy" came to him and said, "The Devil is in the house."

"Oh," said the Bishop, "that is very interesting ! When did he arrive ? "

"He came in with the cook from the *souk* (market) yesterday evening."

"Really ? " commented the Bishop, puzzled.

"Yes, and in the night he came out of the cook and passed into me."

"Oh, and what did he do ? "

"He went to the cupboard and broke a plate and the top of the jam jar."

A light broke in on the Bishop.

"Oh—he was after the jam ! I suppose he ate some ? "

"Yes," said the boy ; "he did ! "

Another long-suffering householder was told time after time that the Devil had broken his plates. Losing patience at last, he cried, "Well, you tell the Devil next time he comes to go into Captain ——'s kitchen and break *his* plates, instead of mine ! "

The idea of devil-possession is not merely an elaborate form of excuse ; the native servant really believes in it. One man possessed a cook who at times had a devil who caused him to bubble and froth at the mouth. The other servants



dared not go near him when he was possessed, but happily the Devil did not prevent his cooking. He would turn out an excellent dinner of several courses, bubbling all the while, but the dishes were pushed out to his frightened fellow-servants through the doorway—not one would venture into the kitchen.

Their idea of honesty is somewhat primitive. In the early times the Bishop of Khartoum shared a garden with Major ——. The Bishop, one of the most energetic of men, undertook to get the garden into shape himself, and laboured hard at it with a native gardener. He thought he might utilise the opportunity in other ways as well, and talked to the gardener of such improving subjects as the advantages of honesty and straight-dealing. The man responded intelligently and appreciatively. “Wallahi,” he said, “your words are the words of God! You speak truth.”

Next day the Bishop, not to harp on the ethical string too much, confided that he intended to build a hut at the end of the garden. The gardener asked of what materials he would build it. “Sun-dried bricks,” replied the Bishop, “and mud mortar.” “Why not proper mortar?” “Be-

cause lime is too expensive." The gardener beamed. "Do not let *that* trouble you! I know where the bags of lime are kept at the Public Works, and to-morrow, after dark, you and I——"

One of the Bishop's suffragis,\* by the way, was the Khalifa's water-carrier: he was found wounded near the Khalifa's body at the battle in which Abdullahi met his doom.

There is a season in Khartoum, that is to say, from the end of December to the end of March there are dances, tennis-parties, a garden-party or so at the Palace, gymkhanas, picnics and polo. The gaieties are not on so large a scale as those of Cairo, but, as in a large hill-station in India, there is usually some engagement to write against every date, especially when the tourist invasion is at its height. There is a pleasant lack of swagger about these entertainments; the Levantine element is entirely excluded, women do not overdress, and those who do not possess pony-carts or dog-carts with smart little *waleds* like turbaned black imps perched behind, ride to dances or functions on donkeys.

Indeed, every one rides on the unpretentious ass,

\* Table servants.

from the British private who discourses cheerfully and profanely to the donkey boy alongside in plain Cockney or broad Scots, to the tourist and the high official. The hireable donkey is the taxi of Khartoum. He is mostly saddled with a stirrupless native saddle covered with a dyed sheepskin, he is often without a bridle, and the fare is a piastre or two, or four for the afternoon. You direct his footsteps by prodding his neck or kicking his sides, and if this fails, the donkey boy tugs him into the way that he should go with blood-curdling sounds. The donkey boy is a barefoot chocolate-hued ragamuffin aged anything from eight to eighty, and he urges his charge along with an indrawn hiss which sounds like "*I'll teach you in a minute !*" or a staccato "*Arr !*" in his throat. Thus encouraged, the small beasts canter or trot along nimbly, however heavy their load. On the whole, they are well-conditioned little beasts, and have the long-suffering of angels, but it is as well to lift the sheepskin and see if there are saddle sores.

The bray of the ass is heard from morning to night in the Sudan. There is nothing in the known realm of sound that can equal that



passionate protest from its highest note to the pacified sob at the end. The Arabs tell a good tale about it. When the animals were first created, they say, the asses idled so much of their time away in paying court to their lady-loves that they neglected their work. In his anger, Allah swore that there should never be any more she-asses. Horrified at this, the donkeys lifted their voices and wept. Allah could not endure the noise. "For pity's sake, stop," said he, "and I will take back what I have said!" The donkeys ended in a sigh of relief. But to this day they voice their feelings after the same manner.

There are a good many grass tennis lawns in Khartoum. They need very careful watering, and are no good after the third year unless they are dressed and left unused. But polo is not played on grass (turf is too precious), but in the desert beyond Omdurman. The journey is made in the Governor-General's boat, the "Elfin," once one of Gordon's boats. It was discovered when Khartoum was re-taken in 1898, lying high and dry on the shoal, pock-marked with shot and shell, rotten, rusty, but with engines that were not





WASHING VEGETABLES IN THE EARLY MORNING, OMDURMAN.

[S. Dunn, Esq.]



entirely past work. In its second incarnation it is as smart as white paint can make it, but it is interesting to think of its past history. On the long sandy shore of Omdurman, donkeys and ponies and dogcarts are waiting, and every one mounts or clambers in as the case may be, and the cavalcade starts through the maze of one-storied mud rabbit-hutches, that is Omdurman, for the desert beyond. A slight detour to the left will take you to the ruins of the Mahdi's tomb—that grave of the faith of thousands; and then over the huge square which the dervishes made their open-air mosque. The polo ground is visible from afar by its gay marquee, and the Sudanese Infantry Band is rendering "The Girl in the Train" perfectly, though they have never as much as set foot in a theatre in their lives, and to sit through a musical comedy would cause their eyes to start out of their black heads with astonishment. It might be Ranelagh or Hurlingham but for the lack of green turf. Instead, the sand has been rolled hard.

It is the last polo match of the season, and the Departments are playing the Infantry for the Challenge Cup. There is a cloud of dust, in which

you dimly discern men and ponies and swinging sticks; the sun beats down swelteringly, the spectators consume tea or coffee or lemonade in the tent or its shadow, while a crowd of eager ragamuffins of all sizes and colours watch the proceedings from behind the barrier. Their teeth show in dazzling grins, their eyes glisten in their round dark countenances. There are little girls, too, with their hair plaited into at least two hundred tiny plaits over their heads, and greased with mutton-fat.

It is over at last—the Departments have won, and the ponies are being rubbed down by attentive syces. The band plays the two national anthems, and the proceedings end up with a horse-auction, one of the victors making an excellent auctioneer. Finally, the laws of our country are broken by a raffle, and when the pony so disposed of has fallen to a lady, every one, mightily contented, mounts his donkey or gets into his conveyance.

The amazing thing is that this takes place on the very spot where, only thirteen years ago, within the short lifetime of some of the children who have been looking on, war-drums beat the Jihad. It does not strike the average Englishman as

incongruous. It is very characteristic of him, is it not? The Englishman is never disturbed by time, place or climate. He eats his food, plays his games, and sings his hymns on Sundays, no matter where he is. He will probably do the same, or its disembodied equivalent, in the next world, whatever the Angels think about it.



## CHAPTER IV

### FIAT LUX

A TOURIST once made an epigram about the Sudan which expressed neatly the impression first gained by new-comers. "Apparently," he said, "the Sudan is run for the benefit of the unemployed sons of our nobility." He might have added, "at the expense of the Egyptian Treasury," and voiced the bitter contention of some malcontents in Cairo. The second accusation I shall deal with later on. But to the first bunch of critics it may be answered that, though these young sprigs of British aristocracy do come out to the Sudan, it is certainly not for amusement. They play, it is true, when circumstances allow, but they work with an unflagging will and enthusiasm that would appal our ready-to-strike labouring classes, whose motto would seem to be, "Never put your heart into your work."

The visitor to Khartoum is apt to imagine, after a week's stay during which he has had a remarkably good time, that it is all play, because he meets his hosts only in their moments of relaxation. If he stays longer and keeps his eyes and ears open, the most casual observer will be undeceived and will gather that if the country is run for any one's benefit, it is certainly not exploited in the interests of those who have undertaken the difficult task of civilising, pacifying, and ruling it with justice and equity.

In many parts of the Sudan the only hold the English inspector has on the natives is their belief, founded on experience, that the Englishman will weigh out justice with an impartial hand, and do his best to right wrongs and alleviate disaster with the unending capacity for taking pains that some one defined as genius. It is, in fact, a *succès d'estime* in the most literal sense of the phrase. Accustomed for generations to pillage, slaughter, slave-raiding, want and disease, the paternal methods of the Englishman come home to their intelligence with a shock. The Englishman is stark, staring mad, with his fussy ideas about sanitation and his way of refusing bribes, but it is

a madness which brings blessings in its wake. So much is this the case, that before the rains come in the Khartoum district, the downfall is supposed to be more plentiful on the land on which the inspector has trodden during his circuit of inspection, and the farmers set crops accordingly. As one man put it, "If Allah is pleased with the inspector, He brings rain to show that his feet are blessed."

There is a tale in the Bahr-el-Ghazal about an old man who accused another of stealing his cattle. The Englishman listened to the plaintiff, who was supported by his son as witness; then he had the accused brought before him and asked him what he had to say in defence. The old man arose. "Is this justice!" he cried. "Come away, my son. *This man listens to both sides!*"

And two stories culled from the *Annual Reports* of 1909 and 1910—more human than most Blue Books, by the way, will be illustrative of the difficulties encountered by the English inspector.

"A., a Dinka, stole ten bulls from B., another Dinka. B. tried to recover his cattle, whereupon



a court was assembled, chiefly composed of A.'s friends. There was no dispute, and A. fully acknowledged the theft. But the Court, while ordering that the cattle should be returned to B., not only adjudged no punishment to A., but since he had suffered all the trouble and risk of stealing the cattle and was going to derive no benefit therefrom, he should keep one of the stolen bulls for his hard fortune. The fact was that there was not one of the assembled judges but had, at some time in his life, stolen or attempted to steal a neighbour's cattle, consequently not one who could cast the first stone. Wherefore, it is easily seen why the Inspector, who caused restoration of all the captured cattle and also fined the thief, is looked upon as a brutal, and probably conscienceless innovator."—(*From the Report of the Upper Nile Province*).

(Gedid District). "A certain individual promised a cow to a Fiki \* if he could write a charm which would have the effect of making his wife, who had hitherto been childless, bear him children. The Fiki wrote the charm, and in course of time the woman became the mother of a son; but when the Fiki asked the husband to fulfil his part of the bargain and hand over the cow, the husband

\* Religious teacher.

refused. The Fiki then wished to sue the husband in the courts, and was somewhat disappointed when he was told that if he could write a charm which could work such a miracle, there was no need for him to have recourse to the courts to enforce his debts against the husband." (*Report of the White Nile Province.*)

And in his Report of the Halfa Province for 1910 Captain Bassett, the acting Governor, tells the tale of a Kababish woman charged with the murder of a fellow-wife by attacking her from behind, whilst she was drawing water from the river, and drowning her. The evidence, he said, was conflicting, and the injured husband did not serve to elucidate matters much. Though deeply attached to the young and favourite wife who had been drowned, he was not anxious for the conviction of the other, his point being that, having lost one, he might at all events try to keep the other.

This is comprehensible when one remembers that a dowry must be provided for every wife taken, not by her father, but by the prospective husband.

The Hadendowa Arabs, who wander about in

the Eastern Sudan and are cattle-owners, have blood feuds; and are apt to resent any interference with the old law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; and in the Southern Sudan the Dinkas, Shilluks, and Nuers make a point of killing a man if they suspect him of withholding rain—for there are professional rainmakers who are accredited with powers of drawing showers. They also think it right to kill wizards and witches; and to prove whether the accused is guilty, they have recourse to trial by ordeal—they administer poison, or force the suspected person to go into the river or pass through fire. If the supposed witch or wizard survives the poison, escapes the crocodiles, or avoids being badly burnt, he or she is proved to be innocent. Another method is divination by chickens. A man will even consent to the murder of near relatives if he believes that they are guilty of witchcraft. After all, we were not much better but a few centuries ago in civilised England!

The inspector has to make it his care to respect tribal law as far as he can. In dealing with the Dinka tribes, where the tribal code is very elaborate and explicit (I shall refer to these later on), for



instance, the inspector finds a definite system of fines upon which he bases his judgments. Many of the laws dealing with marriage might serve as models in the schemes of European eugenists and social reformers.

The native is ridding himself slowly of the idea that justice can be bought. The venal Egyptian and Turk, his former masters, accustomed him to the bribe, but he is now learning to take his place in the courts as an ordinary litigant. Other deeply inculcated ideas take some time to root out, as that of blood money. For instance, there is a Sudan ordinance similar to the English Workmen's Compensation Act. This is confounded with the more ancient practice in the native mind, and in every case of death from injuries, the petition presented by the dead man's relatives asks for "blood-money." I am informed that it is difficult to persuade the relatives that they are entitled to nothing unless they can prove their dependency on the dead man. They regard the payment as a pious offering on the part of the employer, to wipe out the stain of blood.

The Law Courts are situated in Khedive Avenue. They are a fine building, its front shaped like a

blunt E. Within are high, cool rooms and many corridors. The court-rooms are provided with bench, bar and witness-box, as in England, and a black usher in uniform.

Criminal cases are not tried in the Law Courts, but in the Police Court. There are two Mohammedan courts, the Cadi's Court (the Court of First Instance), and the Grand Cadi's Court (the Court of Appeal). Then come the District Court, presided over by a Civil magistrate with jurisdiction up to £10; and the Civil Court, presided over by the Civil Judge—the highest court of the First Instance. The Civil Court has unlimited jurisdiction. The Court of Appeal is at present in the Court of the Judicial Commissioner, but it is hoped shortly to have a proper Court of Appeal with three judges.

As I have indicated, Government inspectors have the power to judge civil cases; but civil judges go on circuit from time to time in some parts of the country.

The criminal courts are modelled more or less on the Indian pattern; and the more important cases are tried by three magistrates on the bench. The criminal courts are in the offices of the Governor of the Province.

In Khartoum there are three civil judges and one chief judge, one police magistrate and three district civil magistrates. The small or district court for civil cases under £10 is judged by an Egyptian officer.

There are many picturesque features in the law courts, many touches of romance. In the long sunny arcade with its chequered shade, as I passed down it, sat a little group of Jews, in Biblical dress, their long curls descending to their shoulders like the Jews of Jerusalem, waiting for their case to be called. Muraslas, native messengers in white and green, go backwards and forwards with that indolent swiftness which is never equivalent to European bustling. A colourful element in the court-room is the black usher, a tall, powerful Sudanese who was formerly the slave of the Shenari family of Suakin, once wealthy merchants, now fallen on evil days. I was told that the faithful ex-servant sends some of his pay to his impoverished masters. He was also a soldier, and it is said that at the beginning of his *régime* he was discovered drilling the witnesses !

There is an interpreter for such cases as are conducted in the vernacular ; many of the magis-



trates, however, understand Arabic so well that they scarcely need him. The manner of procedure in a civil case is very simple, so that a litigant can conduct his case in person: a written petition is sent in to the judge by the plaintiff, and if he has a legal claim, the petitioner pays the fees. The case is then fixed for hearing and tried.

Civil law in the Sudan is at present a very uncertain quantity. Until the commercial conditions of the country are better known it will be useless to frame codes as has been done in Egypt. From time to time ordinances are drafted to meet the requirements of civil justice, and no doubt these will be consolidated at some future date. But the legislator has not kept pace with the community. Many important ordinances have not yet been drafted, while others have been drafted but not passed. These ordinances have to be passed in Cairo and Khartoum, and the waste of time can only be described as ridiculous, sometimes extending to years of red ink and bad temper. It is to be hoped that this matter will be taken in hand seriously and that some effort will be made to meet the needs of the growing commercial community.

The Criminal Code of the Sudan is simply the Indian Penal Code, adapted to the country. From 1909 to 1910 the total number of civil cases for the whole Sudan was 8,839, the total convictions in the more serious offences tried by Non-Summary Courts, 632 ; the death sentence was carried out on ten persons.

There are a few mounted police in Khartoum, all educated natives of high intelligence, and quarters were erected for them two years ago by prison labour. Prison labour is used for strange purposes : I remember, when assisting to arrange scenery for some open-air theatricals, that a few criminals were lent to help us with the more strenuous pieces of labour. They proved most polite and intelligent ! I was told that it is found of infinite benefit to treat the prisoners humanly as well as humanely. They respond to interest like children, and show themselves open to reason. There is the confirmed criminal in the Sudan as well as in England, but only a very small percentage of prisoners confined on criminal charges are criminals by nature.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BENDING TWIG

EDUCATION, to be useful to the community, should fit a man for that station of life to which it shall please God to call him. It should not render him too fine to carry out the work in society to which he is by disposition and heredity adapted ; on the other hand, it should not deprive him, should he show greater capabilities, of the opportunity of utilising them for the good of all. Above all, it should not rob the land of her heritage of labour.

The education of the black, or rather semi-black, man is an important matter. Here is a vast territory, as big as Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal put together, for the well-being of which England has made herself answerable. It will, supposing that it develops normally, boast in future years a large population. In our hands lies the responsibility



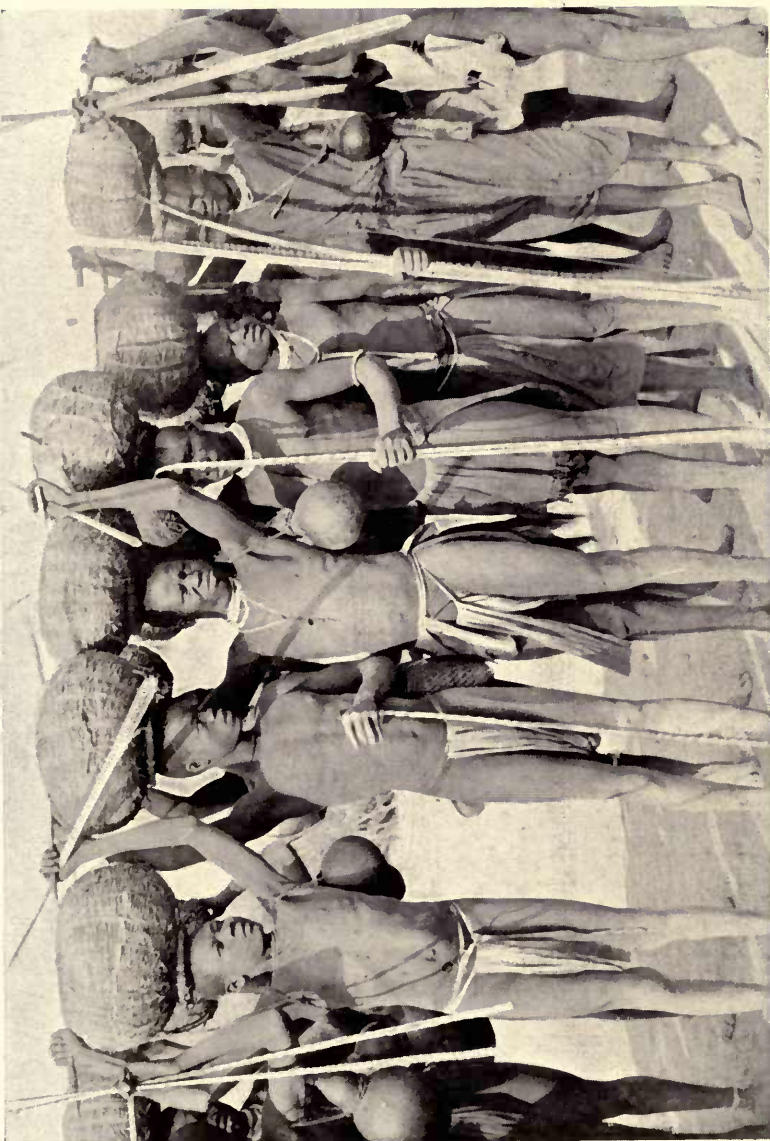
of moulding the unborn race. How are we accepting it ?

The raw material is at present the so-called Arab tribes and Moslem nondescripts of the Northern Provinces, also the Pagans of the South, the Shilluks, Dinkas, Nuers, Nubas, Nyam-Nyams and others. It is as varied as—more varied than—the nationalities of Europe as to race, tongue, custom and religion. It comprises the sons of those who fell in their thousands at Omdurman, and those black tribes who have for centuries provided the slave-markets of the world. It comprises the sleek and time-serving Berberine and the haughty Baggara tribesman.

Education on such a vast scale could not be compulsory. It must be uniform, but it must be elastic, so as to adapt itself to the various idiosyncrasies of tribe, race and place. It must be religious, to provide an ethical ideal applicable to all, but it must not be sectarian or bigoted.

The system adopted in the Sudan may, I think, be said to conform in the main with these requirements. It is my purpose here to survey it as briefly as possible, and then to look at the results.

The simplest form of schooling that a boy can



[S. Duane Esq.]

JURS AT MVOLO (BAHR-EL-GHAZAL), SHOWING TYPES OF FACES AND ORNAMENTAL WALKING-STICKS,  
BOWS AND SPEARS, AND TATTOOING ON BODIES.





get in the Sudan is the kuttab, or elementary vernacular school. These kuttabs are scattered throughout the provinces, but placed only in districts which pay an educational rate, or tax, of so much on the ardeb.\* They are under the direct supervision of the local mamur or police official, and their administration is modified and adopted by the Governor of the Province, through whose hands all the correspondence between the headmaster of a kuttab and the educational centre at Gordon College must pass, the master communicating to the mamur, and the mamur forwarding the communication to the Provincial Office through the inspector. In the kuttab a pupil learns to read and write in Arabic, simple arithmetic, geography, the Koran and his duty towards his neighbour. Native dress is worn, and school work is not allowed to hinder a boy from helping his parents in agricultural work at times when he is really needed by them. Books and materials are provided for the scholars free of charge. Sons of those who do not pay rates are charged a fee of five piastres a month, that is to say, one shilling and a halfpenny. The Gordon College at Khartoum,

\* The unit of measure of dry goods.

under the directorship of Mr. James Currie, is responsible for the syllabus, staff, and actual teaching, and educational inspectors are sent round from time to time.

Thus an education of some kind is accessible to the bulk of the population of the Sudan, and it is an education not calculated to draw them away from the cultivation of their crops or care of their cattle, but sufficient to make the younger generation less fanatical and superstitious than their elders. As a rule, when a boy has finished his three years at one of these elementary schools, he goes back to the land; but a percentage, a very small percentage, is sent on to the primary schools.

In the primary schools a boy is trained for Government employ. He learns advanced religious teaching, English, Arabic, a little practical carpentry, geometry and land-measuring. At the end of a four years' course in the primary school, a boy is able to fill adequately a minor official post and earn £3 or more a month. Egyptians are only eligible for such positions if they are domiciled in the Sudan.

An annual examination is held at the primary schools, and from the boys who show special ability

a select number is picked out to go on to the secondary school. In 1911 the number of boys at the secondary school was 64, of whom 57 were Moslems, 7 Copts. The primary schools from which these boys had been drafted were those of Gordon College (16 boys); Omdurman (30); Wad Medani (5); Berber (9); Halfa (2); and Suakin (1).

There is only *one* secondary school—namely, Gordon College. The lads so picked out of the primary schools then bifurcate into two sections. One section is destined for teaching, the other for engineering. The teacher section is taught in Arabic, and supplies the teachers for the kuttabs, those who do not enter the employ of the Gordon College becoming interpreters and clerks. The course lasts four years. A boy who enters the second section has a five years' course, and when it is finished he is drafted into the Public Works, Railways, Irrigation or other branches of public service.

All the instruction in this section is given in English, as no native instructors and books are available.

The secondary school, excellent as it is, has



had to confront two undesirable tendencies. The teachers of the first section are largely Egyptian, and it has been suspected that some of them, possessed of Nationalist leanings, may not have had an altogether desirable effect upon the minds of their pupils. The boys who leave the engineering section, on the other hand, sometimes leave it "a little too big for their boots," as one English official expressed it to me. These tendencies, however, can be safely left to the wise correction of Mr. Currie and his staff, who have surmounted many worse difficulties in dealing with the problem before them.

Another important section of the Gordon College is the Training College of Sheikhs. A sheikh, roughly speaking, is a person of standing, so that these young sheikhs represent the best Arab blood of the country. Here you will find one of the Khalifa's sons, a fine intelligent youth, and two of the Mahdi's grandsons, each aged about nineteen. It is strange to see these youths and their companions with their turbans, flowing robes, sashes and loose-sleeved coats, in such a milieu as the Gordon College class-rooms. Their fathers lived mostly in the insanitary and fanatical barbarism

of Omdurman in Dervish days. These their sons and grandsons live a life which differs little from that of an English schoolboy. They have their baths, their dormitories, their lockers, their system of prefects (the monitor is called *alfus*), their fire-drill, and their football! They are lovable boys, and respond with fire to an appeal to their honour or to their affection. An Englishman who knew them at close quarters told me that their sense of "what was cricket" was as keen as that of any average English public school boy.

The sheikhs pass first through the primary schools, like the rest, and at the end of their training they are ready to become cadis, ulemas, and so on.

It is not likely, however, that the sons of those who galloped to certain death on the slaughter-field of Kerreri would devote themselves entirely to the arts of peace, or that the sons of the fighting blacks could all dedicate themselves to mild pursuits. It would be a sheer waste of excellent fighting material. There is, therefore, a Military School affiliated to the Gordon College, which is a sort of Sudanese Sandhurst. The Cadets of the Military College receive all their literary training

in the Gordon College, but drill and learn proficiency in all military subjects from their military instructors. An English officer is in command of the school, an English sergeant is in charge of the drill, and the teaching staff was composed in 1911 of three native officers. The cadets live at the military school, and must be under sixteen years of age when they enter it. It was my fortune to see them both at work and at play. They look fine, well-set-up lads in their khaki uniforms; and when a skating rink was opened at Khartoum, the cadets took up roller-skating with great zest, entirely unruffled by falls, their dark—mostly black—faces one perpetual grin of good-nature and fun.

Finally, there is the Technical School at Gordon College. In order to enter the industrial workshops it is not necessary for a boy to have passed through the primary schools first—he can be drafted into them straight from the kuttāb, and usually enters before he is twelve years old. There are no fees, and the boy who enters signs a contract to stay three years in the school. There are two sections—the carpenters' and the practical engineering section. In the workshops the boys



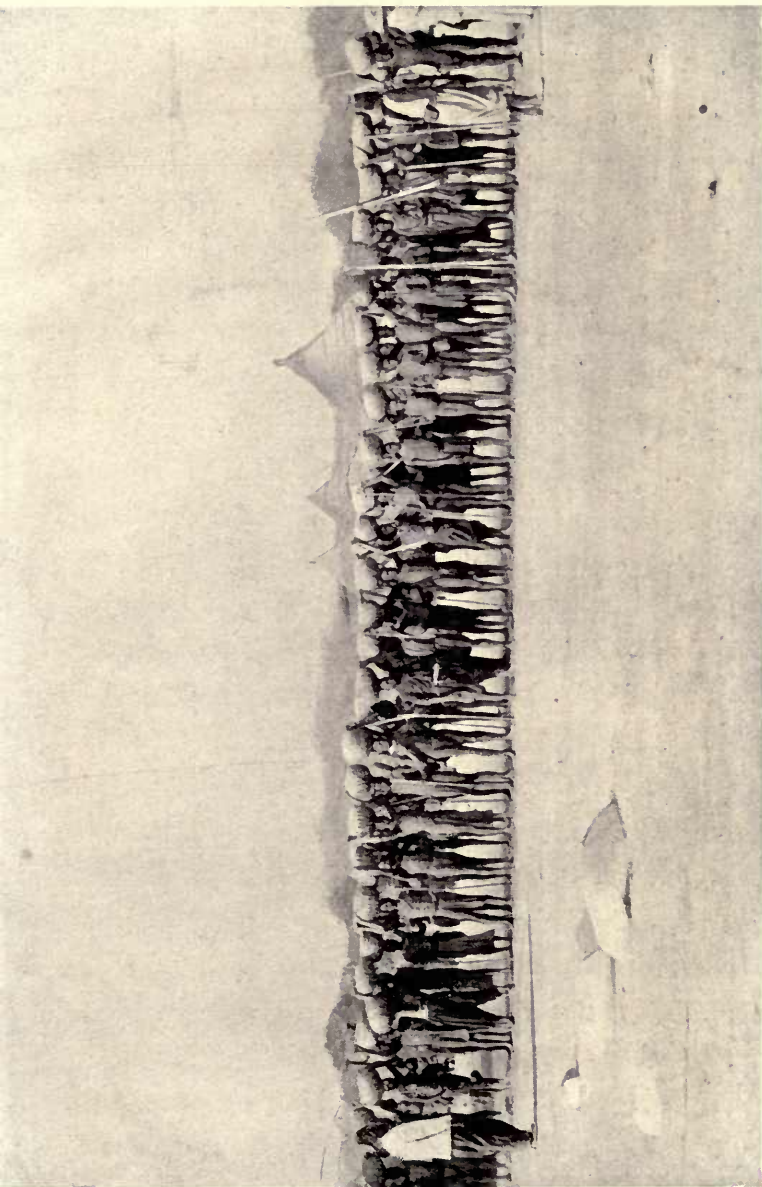
learn fitting, smithwork, machine-running and other branches of practical knowledge, and it is a pleasure, if one goes over the premises, to see the industry and cheerfulness which prevail. The boys look very intelligent, and have, as a matter of fact, executed most of the work of the new College buildings, including the iron railings, the electric light fittings, and the furniture. In addition to their crafts, the boys in this school learn how to write, read and draw, and are instructed in religion and the Koran.

So much for the bare bones of the system. How does it work ?

If one judged only from what one saw at Gordon College the answer would be enthusiastic. The visitor passes from class-room to class-room ; he sees the students at work, the workshops humming with activity ; is favourably impressed by the gardens, the football grounds (the Gordon College boys can play an excellent game and often meet our regimental teams), and by the keen interest displayed by the staff in their work. If he judged only by this, the scheme would appear ideal. But no scheme on earth is perfect, and it would be idiotic to expect this one to be without blemish.

One thing must be borne in mind during our consideration. It does not matter "tuppence," speaking materially, to the welfare of the Sudan whether a man believes the world to be round or flat. But what is, and will continue to be, important to her for many years, is that he may be able to dig. The country is undeveloped for lack of labourers, and will be for many years to come.

Now the natural instinct of the native teacher, if he takes a pride in his work, is to produce the boy with no ambition beyond a Government clerkship, the very type of boy who is ornamental, inefficient and unnecessary at the present stage of national development. This tendency will have to be rigorously repressed, and the primary schools should only be fed with *just* as many boys as can be trained efficiently for professional and commercial life, and *no more*, however intelligent the boys in the kuttabs may be. The industrial workshops are excellent, but artisans must not be produced at the cost of agriculture. It is significant and eloquent that the education rate in agricultural districts is paid in durra. One cannot help wondering if it would not be possible to give



JURS AT MVOLO CARRYING IN THEIR TRIBUTE, ABOUT FIFTY POUNDS OF DURRA.

[S. Dunn, Esq.]





some sort of agricultural education as well, similar to the Jewish educational farms and settlements in Palestine. Apprentices could be placed in such farms under much the same conditions as in the industrial workshops. I am more than probably asking this out of my ignorance, but in any case it is a point which occurs immediately to the outside observer.

In the *Annual Report* for 1910, published this year, I read two remarks which bear directly on this question. In his Report of the Berber Province, Captain Townsend, Governor of the province, writes under the heading of "Education":—

"Progress continues, but I fear that a number of people look on schools as a means of making Government look after their children and eventually provide them with billets. . . . Under this heading it may be stated that the Senior Medical Inspector, Atbara, who has kindly furnished me with his remarks, states: 'Pupils from these schools often come for medical examination as to fitness for Government employment, and it is remarkable what poor physiques most of them have. The race does not improve from the

physical point of view as a result of education.' ”

And Colonel Jackson, Governor of Dongola Province, writes :—

“ Dongola School is by far the most advanced establishment in the province. Last year I recommended this school for further advancement, namely, to that of primary class. Since then, however, I have carefully re-studied the question, and have arrived at a definite conclusion that such a step is undesirable. I therefore now withdraw my former recommendation. My reason for this decision is that I consider that the education of the rural children of the province should be confined to the teaching of the Koran, reading, writing, elementary arithmetic, and geography of Egypt and the Sudan. If the children become over-educated, by the teaching of foreign languages, etc., the result will be that they will refuse to return to their former rural life, and will imagine that it is the duty of the Government to find them employment in its service. I therefore am firmly of opinion that province schools should be ‘ Kuttab Schools,’ thus leaving primary education to be carried out at Khartoum.”

. . . . .



In speaking recently at the opening of the railway to El Obeid, Lord Kitchener urged the importance of "steadiness" and cautious going in our development of the Sudan. The same warning may be applied to educative measures. In education, as in everything else, it is necessary to go slowly—above all, with the tribes known as the "Pagans" in the South. For education, literary education, as a matter of fact, has never brought the black happiness, and never will. The black races are born to labour; and, should we now attempt to give them a white man's education, we should be giving them a curse instead of a blessing.

One other feature of the question must be touched upon here—the mission schools. The State religion of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan is Moslem; Government holidays are Fridays (the Mohammedan day of rest), Bairam, Courban Bairam, and Mouled (the Prophet's Birthday). The religion taught in Government schools, therefore, is Mohammedan. Should there be any attempt to proselytize to Christianity in such institutions as the Gordon College, the result, as even the most fervent missionary spirit must

admit, would be disastrous confusion and ill-feeling. For the same reason missionaries are forbidden to proselytize in the North, where the State religion is professed, while in the South, among "Pagans," they are given a free hand. But so, also, are the Moslems; and I have heard it said that the Moslems are more successful at making converts than the Christians, for the reason that the simpler theology and explicit directions of the Mohammedan faith are more easily comprehensible to the Pagan brain.

However, missions are not in any way discouraged from educational work, and mission schools throughout the country have undoubtedly been civilising factors. It is sometimes complained that when a boy who is a Christian convert enters a Government school, he becomes a Moslem, for though no pupil's religious belief is interfered with, it is only natural that the boy's environment and comrades should influence his attitude of mind.

It is indisputable, meanwhile, that men of the stamp of the British Missionaries and the Austrian Fathers of Lul and Tonga will leave a mark for good in the country to which they have devoted

their lives, and incidentally they are doing a great service to the sciences of anthropology, folk lore, and language, by their study of such peoples as the Dinkas, the Shilluks, and the other tribes with whom they are in close and intimate contact.



## CHAPTER VI

### “ THE SITT—OF ALL COLOURS ”

**I**T is a boisterous day in spring—the warm, dry sand and dust are blown into your nose, mouth and eyes as you drive along one of the windy streets of Khartoum. The telegraph posts and flat-roofed drab-coloured houses look more than usually unattractive and prosaic in the universal dust. The world is brown, sun-baked and gritty.

In front of a building the size of a large parish room at home, you stop, and enter. The interior is pleasantly cool, and seems dim after the sandy glare without. Chairs fill the body of the hall, and on a wide platform, in rows upon rows, are neat and smiling little girls, dressed in white frocks which would remind one of nothing as much as little English schoolgirls gathered together for Empire Day, if it were not for the complexions

above the frocks. There is every shade of skin, beginning at olive and shading down through *café au lait* to black. But the dimples and bloom are there even in the blackest, a bloom which lends the complexion the satin surface and texture of a ripe plum. Syrian mistresses keep the little souls in order. The English *sitt* who has made herself responsible for their good behaviour whispers an admonition to this wriggling little person, a word of encouragement to that shy and solemn little person, while she receives her guests. To-day, she and her aides-de-camp are receiving the fathers and brothers of all this multi-coloured feminine humanity, together with some of the English residents. The fathers and brothers, wearing their best tarbushes, their faces cheerful with expectation and recognition, sit on one side of the hall, the English visitors on the other. It is the *Ihtifal*, the “speech day” of the Girls’ School of Khartoum.

There are four girls’ schools in the Sudan, and of these four, only one, at Rufaa, is a Government school; the other three are mission schools—one at Omdurman, one at Atbara, and one at Khartoum. That of Khartoum is the largest,

for it numbers close on two hundred pupils. There is no distinction of class, race or religion in the school, the teaching is non-sectarian, and every little girl, whether black, brown or white, is welcomed and instructed in the simplest elements of education—reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and English. English, however, is only taught in the upper classes, the majority of children learn in the vernacular.

The programme is a long one, for every child who can perform is anxious to show off before its proud parents; and there are recitations in English and Arabic, English and Arabic part-songs with action, and a dialogue between two girls on the benefit of learning, in Arabic. This last provokes tremendous applause from the fathers and brothers, it is so very “educated” and “genteel.” There is something inexpressibly comic in hearing a small black thing about four or five reciting “Twinkle, twinkle, little star,” or some other English nursery ditty; and one young reciter is so overcome with shyness that she breaks down and has to run away, to be comforted and reassured. Learning by heart comes easily, almost too easily, to native children.



At the end of the proceedings *portogan* (orangeade) and refreshments are served, and the gratified fathers and brothers troop out again, to tell the mothers and sisters at home how splendidly little Fatma or Zia or Nazli has acquitted herself; and the mother, hearing it, thinks what an excellent match she will be able to make for her daughter later on, when she is of marriageable age; for accomplished young women can look high.

I was told that not all the pupils were children. There were three grown-up *sittat*—three married women in the school, who came and went in their veils. One of these was a young woman whose husband was away from her, studying French in Paris. She came to the school and said that she would like to join the English classes, so that she might be able to educate herself in his absence. There was something pathetic in this woman's striving patiently over the beginnings of English with children less than half her age, in order that her husband, when he returned, might find that she, too, was accomplished in foreign learning.

As a rule, prospective husbands of the better class of Egyptian or Arab prefer a well-educated wife,

but this is not always the case. The English lady in charge of this mission school told me the tale of two sisters who once were pupils of hers, and it is worth transcribing for the light that it casts upon the revengeful pettiness of the Egyptian. The girls were partly Circassian, the elder, a more than ordinarily pretty girl, being as intelligent as she was good-looking. So anxious to learn was she that she persuaded her parents to let her stay on at the school a whole year after her younger sister had left. The younger was a nice girl, but fat, placid, and altogether less interesting. Their father was very proud of the elder girl's quickness, and though he was fond of his younger daughter, his affections were chiefly centred upon her sister. In due time a young Egyptian officer in a Sudanese regiment came to the father and asked the hand of the younger daughter. The father agreed, and the suitor went away contented. Shortly afterwards a wealthy Egyptian merchant also came to the father, with the request that he would give him his younger daughter in marriage. The father answered: "I have just promised her; but there is <sup>my</sup> elder daughter, much the prettier and the more intelligent of the two,

who is still unmarried; I will give her to you instead.”

“No,” said the merchant. “I want the younger and not the elder.”

The father reflected. It was the wish of his heart to see his elder daughter married suitably, and the rich merchant was just the match he had hoped for her. The suitors’ preference for the younger daughter could only be whim, for of course neither young man had seen the girls. He resolved secretly, therefore, to pass the elder off as the younger, and replied :

“It shall be as you wish ; the girl shall be yours.”

Unfortunately, rumours reached the merchant that some trickery was intended. He went to see the father, and threatened that if he were disappointed in the bride he had chosen he would make trouble. The father assured his prospective son-in-law that his suspicions were false, and that he had no intention of deceiving him : meanwhile quieting his own uneasiness by telling himself that when his best-beloved daughter had shown herself to her husband on the wedding night, all would be well.

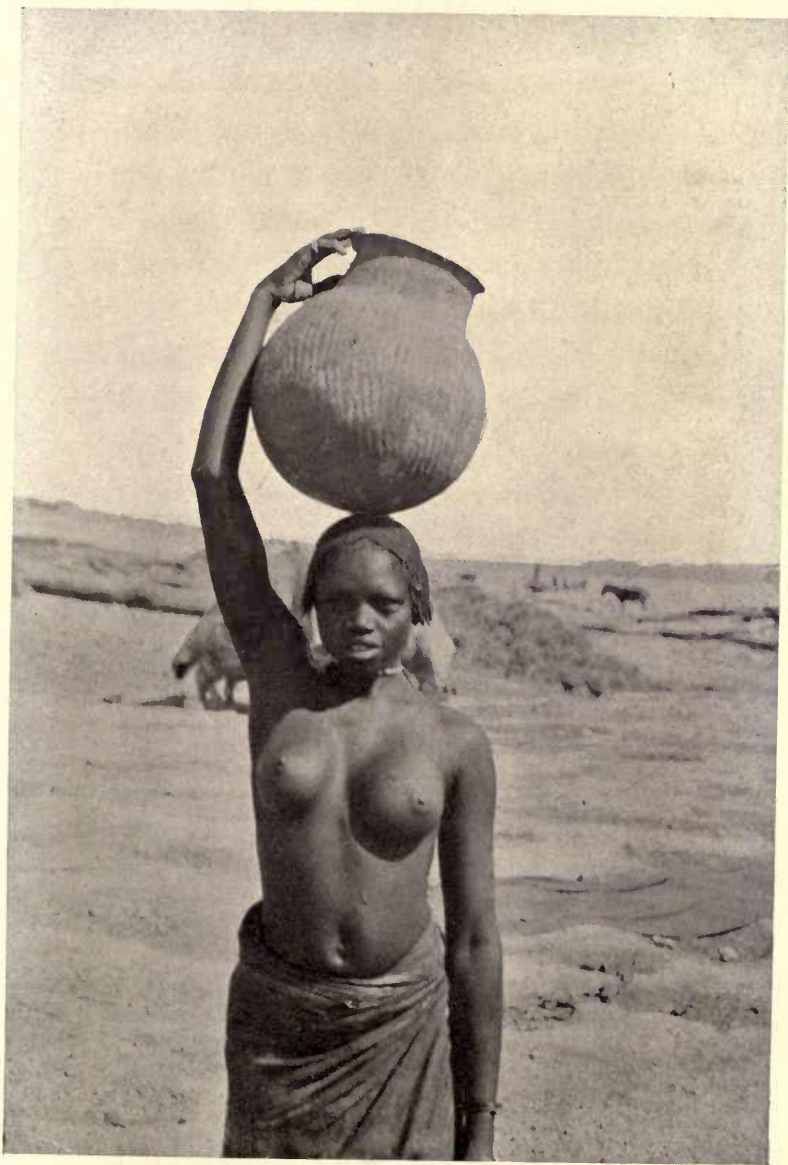
The two weddings took place : the officer taking



the younger, whom we will call N——; and the merchant the elder daughter, M——. When the festivities were over and the Egyptian and his bride were left alone in the wedding chamber, the bridegroom addressed her as N——. Tremblingly, the young bride confessed that she was M—— and not N——. The young husband was furious that he had been duped, and resolved to send her home to her father after only three days of married life—the greatest insult that he could offer to his wife's family, for it is considered a great disgrace if a bride is sent back to her own people.

The girl is now living with her parents, and has small hope of re-marrying, on account of the slight that was put upon her. When remonstrated with, the merchant retorted that he liked the girl well enough, but that he wished to revenge himself upon the father for having deceived him.

The lot of a rich man's daughter in Khartoum or Omdurman, as a matter of fact, is not nearly so happy as that of a poor man's. The wife of a rich man must go veiled and seldom goes into the street; a poor one labours, it is true, but goes unveiled; and the blacker she is, the easier



A FAIR LADY OF OMDURMAN.





her modesty, though sometimes one sees a black beauty veiled to the eyes, or carrying her tobe in her teeth, thus covering the lower part of the face. The tobe is the universal garment throughout the Sudan; it is a mere drapery of blue cotton stuff, which the Sudani woman throws off with no more concern than an Englishwoman throws off an opera-cloak in a theatre, and sees no shame in leaving the upper part of the body as bare as Eve's. I have seen a Sudanese woman stand by the river, disrobe, standing only in her *rahat* or fringe and a petticoat—wash out her tobe, dry it in the sun, and put it on again. The Egyptian ladies dress their hair and themselves in a style which is more or less European, though out of doors they shroud themselves in the *habbara*. The Sudani woman dresses herself as she did in the days of the Mahdi, except that in those days she was not allowed to wear the beads in which her soul delights—that is in public, for Mahdism was a whited sepulchre, and the forbidden luxuries of life were indulged in in secret. But the Sudani woman's mode of hairdressing is the thing that first impresses the stranger, for it is braided into hundreds of rat's-tail plaits all over her head, until

she looks like an archaic bronze figure; and for hair-oil she uses mutton-fat.

Morality has never been very high among the strange mixture of tribes and peoples that make up the population of Omdurman, but however easy their morality, these black daughters of Ham are capable of wonderful fidelity to those they have served. On washing days an old Sudanese woman came to the house in which I was staying, and with a *sans gêne* which would have easily distanced the French washerwoman duchess, she laid aside her tobe before she began operations and did her morning's work in a state as nearly approaching nudity as her conventions allowed. My hostess told me something of her history. Her name was Wasna, and in the Khalifa's time she lived in the household of a rich merchant in Omdurman who was possessed of several wives. But evil days fell upon him, and one by one his wives left him. Old and poverty-stricken, he would have been entirely forsaken had not Wasna, not even a legal wife, but only a slave-woman, tended him and kept him in comfort by her toil. He was never grateful for her care, but took it as a matter of course. One day she came to my

hostess with tears in her eyes and told her that he was dead. "But you had to work so hard to keep him," said my friend. "Your life will be easier now." Nevertheless Wasna was inconsolable. "I shall never hear him say now on Monday morning 'This is the day you go to the English sitt'; and his place is very empty!"

A Sudanese belle does not regard blackness as a drawback; on the contrary, she thinks a white complexion repulsive. But she likes to borrow the coquetties of the white woman all the same. A friend of mine, before starting for home on his summer leave, went to call on a Sudanī Bimbashī and his wife. "What may I bring you back?" he asked. "Bring yourself back, Excellency; we shall be mourning till you return," they answered politely. But at the last moment, as he left the house, the wife put her black head out of the window. "Oh, Excellency, bring me back, of your kindness, a *shenasiya* (a sunshade)," she called after his retreating figure.

Among the Moslems, polygamy is, of course, practised, and it does not bring the unhappiness which Europeans imagine. The first wife often welcomes a second wife, and if she herself is child-



less, or needs help in the household work, she may even urge her husband to re-marry. The women frequently get attached to each other, and a childless wife will be devoted to the children of her luckier co-wife. There are cases of jealousy, of course, but the proportion of jealous wives is not, in my experience, greater in Moslem than in European countries. What causes most unhappiness under the present system is, not polygamy, but divorce. If a man is merely dissatisfied with his wife, he can, by pronouncing the threefold divorce, sever himself from her for ever, nor can he marry her again unless she has married some one else in the meantime. Sometimes a man who has divorced his wife hastily and wishes to re-marry her will hire a man to go through the ceremony of marriage with her, so that a divorce may be again pronounced and the original couple be re-united.

The ease with which divorce is obtained does not lead to a higher standard of morality, particularly with a quick-tempered, passionate negroid race such as the Sudanese.

Among the better-class Egyptian Arabs in Khartoum, it is not uncommon to find a man

with one wife only. There are many happy families. An English resident, who is looked upon with much respect and affection in native Khartoum, told me an anecdote which shows how tact, backed up with a piece of illogical argument, will, in a native household, mend domestic jars which might otherwise have ended in divorce. A certain Bimbashi in Khartoum has a very pretty and cheerful wife, who has borne him many children. The eldest son is at Gordon College; the mother is an intelligent, attractive woman, of whom her husband is justly proud. One day this English lady, sitting in her verandah, saw the little woman coming up the road towards her. Greetings passed, and as the Bimbashi's wife still lingered, she was invited inside, and accordingly entered the house. The English hostess ordered coffee to be brought, and then, seeing her visitor was agitated, said, “You look distressed; will you not tell me what is the matter?”

The Bimbashi's wife politely denied that anything was wrong, but her agitation rose at the sympathetic inquiry.

“But I can see that you are in trouble,” persisted the Englishwoman, gently.

The little woman's reserve broke down. "Have you room for a Muslim woman in your house?" she cried.

"*Beiti beidak* (my house is yours)," replied the Englishwoman promptly, "but why then? Has your husband gone away?"

"No," said the Bimbashi's wife, "but I have left him for ever! I shall never go back."

"But why?"

A torrent of words was her answer, and the whole story came out as they sat over their coffee. As far as her English friend could gather from the incoherent account, what had happened was that the little lady had been washing out her husband's socks, and had hung them on the back of a chair to dry. They were a new and pretty pair, and the eldest son, approving of them, had put them on and gone off in them. His father, wanting the socks, found that they were missing and, losing his temper, abused his wife, accusing her of having no control over her children, of being a bad manageress, of keeping the house ill, and so on. The little woman, exasperated, declared she would leave the house, and did so.

The tale was still proceeding, when her listener,



from her seat in the verandah, beheld the Bimbashi himself coming down the road. She went out. He too, was agitated, and in answer to her greeting he exclaimed, “My wife has left the house, and I am looking for her.”

The Englishwoman replied, “She is here ; come in, and we will talk this matter out.”

He did so, and there was more excited argument. The Bimbashi spoke first, and taking a self-righteous tone, said that a woman should be a man’s under-officer in the house, and should preserve perfect discipline in the family. He worked himself into a fine state of indignation with the rhetorical questions of which the native is so fond. “Am I not always a kind husband ? a devoted father ? ” and so on.

His wife could not listen in silence, and a discussion was in full force, when their eldest daughter arrived. Fresh coffee was ordered, and as soon as the politenesses had been exchanged, the daughter joined in the argument, until it looked like being interminable.

Then the Englishwoman lifted her voice, and said:

“You have both spoken a great deal, and now it is my turn to speak. You, Bimbashi, may

think your wife all that you have said, but there is one thing for which you are very pleased with her."

He looked surprised.

"Yes, you are pleased that, instead of going to the other *Muslemin sittat*, she came to her English friend, who will never breathe a word to any one." She turned to the *sitt*. "And you did very wisely in coming to me, instead of causing *kalam* (talk) to be made all over Khartoum. You are pleased with your husband that he has not proclaimed that you have left him, but has come instead to try and find you. Now, my advice to both is this. Go quietly back, and tell no one about this misunderstanding between you, or great unhappiness will ensue, and let everything be as before. Thus no one shall know what has happened to-day." They agreed to take her advice. The Bimbashi left—it is not etiquette for a man to walk out with his women—and a few minutes later the wife and daughter put on their face veils, and went peacefully homewards. The next time the Englishwoman saw them, they were as contented a family as before.

## CHAPTER VII

### “ GHOSTS ”

ONE day, as I was descending from the steam tram in Khartoum, I saw two men talking by the roadside. A third approached them, and saluting one in the ordinary manner, he lifted the hand of the other to his lips and his forehead. The man so greeted was an ordinary individual enough, of dark complexion and medium height. He wore black European dress and a tarbush, like any Government clerk, and a gaudy tie.

“ Who is that ? ” I asked my companion.

“ That man ? Oh, he is one of the Mahdi’s sons,” was his reply.

In any other country but the Sudan, it would be incredible that an aroma of sainthood could cling to the memory of the man who was proved over and over again by his false boasts to be a charlatan, whose tomb lies in crumbled ruins as



it was left after Kitchener had turned his guns upon it, whose promises have never been fulfilled, for whose sake thousands died, and in whose name the country from end to end was made desolate by war, disease, want and cruelty. If ever there was a lost cause, then Mahdism is a lost cause to-day. Yet the truth is that the people still reverence the Mahdi, think of him as a holy man, and venerate his descendants. For no cause, however lost, is a forgotten cause in the Sudan if it has once rooted itself in popular credulity. The Sudanese is religious by nature. Easy to move to laughter, sensual, cruel, physically courageous, he is capable of intense fanaticism. Nor does it take much to bring it into being. He is simple-minded, easily imposed upon. Individuals, deceivers, or more often self-deceivers, constantly give themselves out as the Mahdi, or as Christ (Saidna Eissa), or as miracle-workers and prophets—and, however thin and poor their pretensions, they are almost certain of a following. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that to the Sudanese there are so many things to wonder at in the universe, so many inexplicable mysteries, that few marvels appear incredible. He attributes the

workings of Nature to the labours of *afrits* and genii. His is the intellect of the child, to whom it seems equally credible that steam should move trains and faith move mountains. The child makes no hard-and-fast line between the natural and the supernatural. Neither does the Sudanese. Electric light is one miracle ; a Mahdi turning bullets into water is another. He is ready to see the supernatural in everything.

For instance, Captain O’Sullivan, Governor of the Upper Nile Province, told me of the way in which a shrine was evolved in a Dinka village at which he was staying. A child—a naked, idle little brat, in playing, took a piece of white rag and stuck it on a stalk of burnt straw, and another child did the same. There the fragments fluttered in the breeze. Now rags, that is to say pieces torn from the garments, are placed on saints’ tombs when their wearers make a petition ; so the next act was that a woman, inspired no doubt by the rags, declared that one night she had seen a ghostly sheikh there. Soon a mound of stones arose, and then a zariba (a defence of thorns) was made to protect it, and now it is a holy place, set about with many flags.

Similarly, a tomb near the house in which I stayed in Khartoum had evolved in much the same way. No one knew its origin, no one could tell me who the saint was, or when he died, or how long the tomb had been there. Some one suggested that there had been an "appearance" on the spot. Be that as it may, white flags waved along the paling built around it; petitioners, humble people, tied rags to the palisades and murmured their requests as they did so; and an earthen jar was set by the tomb and kept full of water by the charitable, so that thirsty wayfarers might drink at the shrine. It was a "holy place," and that was sufficient; and perhaps the piety of these simple devotees had in reality created a beneficent atmosphere about the spot: who knows!

The religious pretensions of a man called Abdel-Kader, and the disturbance caused by them in 1908 at Kemlin, have been made familiar to those in England by the tragic murder of Mr. Scott-Moncrieff. Vengeance followed swiftly, and Abdel-Kader was taken and hanged; but there have been many other similar affairs, which, had they not been put down with promptness, might have



had more serious results. Abd-el-Kader was a holy man and a Mahdist, but others have had more ambitious claims. In 1910, at Kitiab in the Berber Province, a certain man gave himself out to be Sahib el Wakt, or Master of the Times, and resisted with violence the police sent to seize him, killing the Sheikh of the village who had been dispatched as emissary by the Officer of the Police. He was put to death. Halley's Comet also produced disturbances when it appeared, as it was supposed to herald great events in the history of Islam. In November the unrest round Singa, where the people were talking Mahdism, was so grave that a small force was dispatched to quell the seditious; and in Kordofan not long ago a certain man gave himself out as Saidna Eissa (Christ), and, gathering a following, began to give trouble. This too was promptly put an end to, and a number of the followers of the so-called Christ were killed.

One reason why these fanatics gain a hearing is that they use violence as an argument. The Mahdi in the old days converted at the point of the sword, and that is a powerful missionary. Hence the best method of re-conversion is force,

and force displayed so quickly that its mere exhibition prevents large bloodshed.

For the ghost of Mahdism is stained hideously with blood. The population of the Sudan is, even now, after twelve years of peace, not a third of what it was before the Dongolawi proclaimed himself El Muntazzer—The Expected One, the Mahdi. To the tourist who comes, shepherded by Cook, to scamper through the sights, it seems impossible that only fourteen years ago such scenes as are described by Father Ohrwalder and Sir Rudolph von Slatin Pasha in their wonderful narratives of life in Omdurman under the Khalifa can have actually taken place. When they see the able and energetic Inspector-General for the Sudan, the Sirdar's right hand, and one of the busiest officials in the country, they wonder if it can be true that this man ran barefoot in the scorching sand beside the Khalifa's horse, that he lived for many years as personal attendant of the Khalifa under a *régime* whose horrors make one sicken as one reads about them, that he saw fellow European captives die one by one of disease, cruelty and starvation, and lived himself momentarily expecting death. Yet it is all true, miracu-

lous as it may seem. This very man, I was told, when he escaped from Omdurman and arrived at Assuan, was almost broken-spirited by what he had endured. The story was that one night a servant at the officers' mess announced that there was “ wahad ” (some one) without.

“ What does he want ? ”

The servant was vague, but said this wahad wished to deliver news.

They had him brought in, and Slatin, in his dervish jibbeh, stood before them, a dubious figure dazzled by the return to civilisation. The long bondage had robbed him of the power to come in unannounced to say, “ Here I am—Slatin ! I've escaped.”

But not every man who lived through those days is gifted with Sir Rudolph von Slatin Pasha's wonderful resiliency and personality. For most men, the memory is branded into their souls so deeply that a lifetime will not suffice to remove the scars. There are Europeans who survived that time into whom the iron ate so deeply that they can never be the same. The memory of the Khalifa's reign of terror is still a living horror with them. When Mr. Scott-Moncrieff was killed



on his fatal visit to Katfia in the Blue Nile Province, which I mentioned just now, one poor little lay sister in the Austrian Mission Convent was almost beside herself. She was terror-stricken lest there should be a revival of what she had seen in the days of the Khalifa, and wept and would not be comforted.

Of the sufferings of the nuns of the Mission and of Father Ohrwalder's heroic escape, one can read in his fascinating book. But he is modest enough to suppress much of what he endured. He experienced terrible things. When captured in Kordofan, he refused again and again to say the Moslem creed, and was finally taken off to be hanged. He was quite ready to die for his belief. At the last moment, a messenger rode up on a camel to say that he was not to be killed, as the Mahdi thought it would be unlucky to kill a priest. The Dongolawi had just remembered the tradition in the Hadith that Mohammed, flying one day from some pursuers, was sheltered by a Christian priest, and thenceforward told his followers never to harm one. So Father Ohrwalder was taken back, and put in a small straw tukl, where his fanatical enemies amused themselves by thrusting their

spears through the straw and jabbing at the poor man with them until his body was covered with wounds. He ran round and round the tukl like a trapped animal, until, half-crazed with exhaustion and pain, he cried out that he would say the creed. He was then forced to marry, and he earned himself a frugal living as a braid-maker in Omdurman, discovering the way to manufacture it, by pulling a piece of braid to pieces and making his own loom. Thus he kept himself and other captives from starvation. He had several children by his Sudanese wife, who are still supported by him. On this account, namely that he broke his vows, he is not now allowed to celebrate Mass, although he is living a life of asceticism again. His escape was far more difficult than Father Bonomi's, because it was subsequent to it, and Father Ohrwalder also helped two nuns to escape with him, which greatly increased the danger.

The Mother Superior of the convent also was forced to marry, and was fortunate in marrying a Greek. She may be seen any day marketing in Omdurman, has several children, and is much esteemed by every one. The present Superior of the Catholic convent, a successor to Mother

Francesca, was a nun who, being ill, was sent down just before the fall of Khartoum. The old lay-sister to whom I referred above was, like the rest, forced to marry by the Khalifa.

The Copts had a very hard time after the fall of Khartoum. No one was permitted to smoke or drink, and, as they went in fear of their lives, they naturally did not transgress this order. But sometimes a Moslem who bore a Copt a grudge or cast a look of envy on his goods, would come in the guise of a friend, and slip a half-smoked cigarette under his straw mat. A few hours later there would be a pounding at the door, and the Khalifa's body-guard, with their quilted helmets, would come in and accuse the Copt of being an unbeliever and breaking the rules. In vain he pattered off the Moslem creed, and declared he had no drink or smoke in the house. A search was instituted, and in good time the cigarette stump was produced triumphantly as a witness against him. Then he was haled off, beaten, mutilated, or his property seized upon, as the caprice of the tyrant might dictate.

The town of Omdurman itself is in process of reconstruction, but the old landmarks of Mahdism



have not been destroyed, and its ghosts walk the streets of the city.

To begin with, there is the tomb of the Mahdi—that rubble-heap that could never have been anything but a tawdry and insignificant edifice. The remains of the Mahdi have disappeared—the body was burnt and the ashes scattered, and the head—no one knows definitely where the head is, except those who will keep the secret inviolate. As it stands, the tomb is nothing but four ruined walls, standing open to the heat-blended sky, and within, you pick your way over a heap of brown, tumbled masonry. Walk carefully, for scorpions have begun to house here. Lizards, grey, horny, evil-looking little wretches, whisk out of sight as you approach, and a few poor weeds, such as attain a yellowed growth beneath the fierce and moisture-licking sun, have struck root among the rubble.

Then there is the Beit el Mal, the old stores and treasury of the Khalifa, where there is the dusty skeleton of Gordon's piano, a pathetic relic, and where one can buy Dervish firearms for a few piastres. There is the Khalifa's house, no palace at best, but comfortable when compared to the

squalid and miserable huts and tukls which composed Omdurman in his day. It is built of mud bricks like the rest ; the rooms are a little bigger, the place is two-storied, and you are shown the Khalifa's bathroom with its taps for cold and hot water. A poor enough place ; yet a princely dwelling in truth for a Baggara tribesman accustomed to rough living and hard fare. It is inhabited now by one or two Englishmen in the Government service, who say that the thick mud walls keep it very cool in hot weather. There is the Mahdi's house, the great praying square, the house in which Slatin lived—any tourist conducted by Cook's guides can see these, and re-people them for himself.

But Omdurman is not only haunted by reminiscences of the dead, it is haunted by the living. Yonder goes a man without a foot. You look at him more closely and see that for a right hand he has only a stump. Both were amputated by the command of the Khalifa. There are many so mutilated. At the street corner, wrapped in a dirty tobe, an apathetic old woman sits with drooping head in the blazing sun. Her reason has left her ; she is dependent upon alms.

She has neither sons nor kindred—all have been slaughtered ; she herself was passed in her youth from one master to the other. She looks older than her years ; her life has been full of so many horrors that the marvel is that she is still alive. She is *not* alive, she is one of the living ghosts of Omdurman. Thus, in the space of a few yards, are two specimens of the wrecks of which the city, for all its present prosperity, is full, and must be full until another half-century has passed away, and time and the English have wrought their work.



## CHAPTER VIII

### OMDURMAN

**I**N Omdurman you have as curious an ethnological jumble as could be desired. There are Baggaras, Hadendowas, Jaalis, Shaagis, Berberines, Dongolawis, Shilluks, Dinkas, Niam-Niams, Nubas, Nuers, Abyssinians, Jews, Greeks, and mongrels of such complicated lineage that they puzzle even themselves. Experts can tell something from the racial and tribal characteristics; and there are certain tribal marks—three diagonal scars on the cheek distinguish the Jaali, three horizontal scars the Shaigi, and four scars in a square the Dongolawi. But these wasms, or tribal marks, are not always to be depended on. They are made by cutting into the flesh with some sharp instrument, and then rubbing in gunpowder. Sudanese belles will decorate their bodies in a similar manner.

Steevens called Omdurman “a rabbit-warren—



A LADY OF SIX FOOT FIVE IN OMDURMAN.





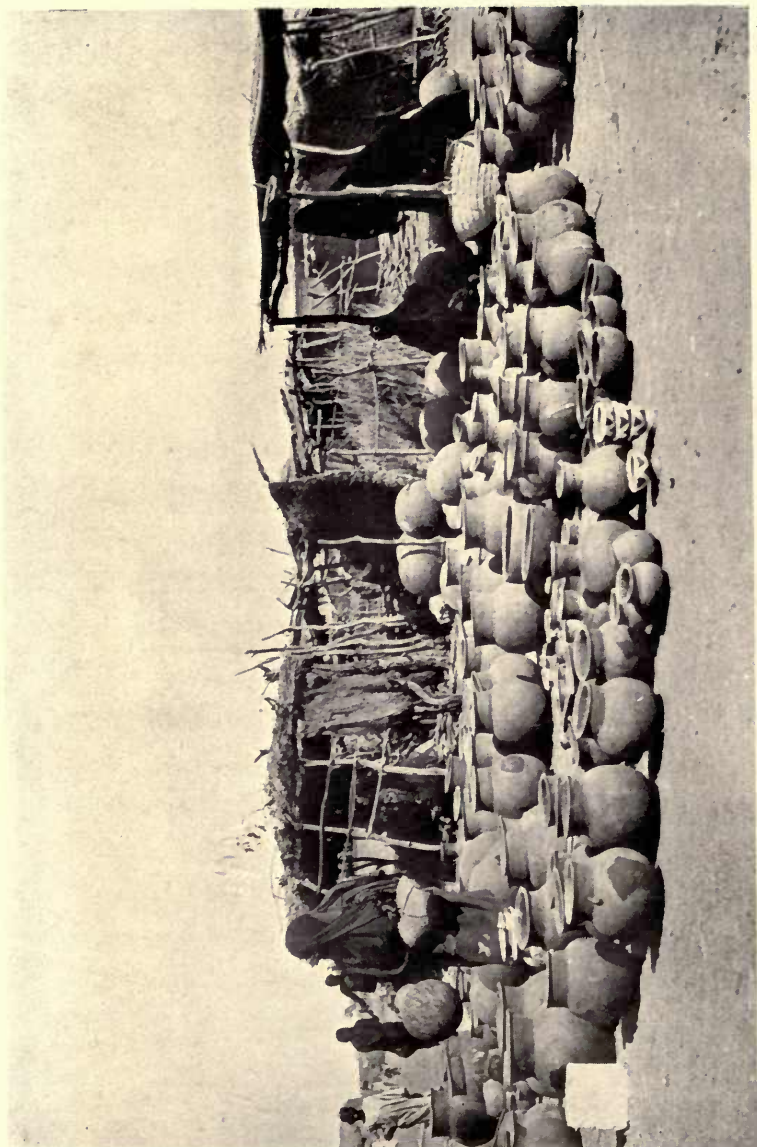
a threadless labyrinth of tiny huts or shelters." It remains a rabbit-warren still, though the filth and stagnant pools are things of the past, and there are neat mud houses and fairly wide streets in place of the old maze of rubbish-heaps. But few of the houses rise higher than one story ; and in the market-place the odd conglomeration of booths like hutches, funny little erections of matting propped up at the four corners by roughly cut trees ; mud shops whose counter is the owner's seat, and cramped huts where the artisans sit plying their trades on the earthen floor in view of the passer by—many of these look like the dwellings of beavers or conies rather than men. But cleanliness is now enforced by the British Government. In the old days, when a donkey died in the street, he was left there until he became bones, and the process was not sanitary. Now the owner would be fined for such neglect ; and slow camels, their humps swaying as they plant their great pads forward on their careful way, thread their path through the streets and collect the minor rubbish from door to door. Yes, Omdurman, slattern as she is, is forced to be clean nowadays, and on the whole, there is a pleasant scent about the town.

There is the savoury smell of frying oil and onions about the native cook-shops where kebabs are roasted in the open air ; there is the wholesome fragrance of the grain market, where heaps of shining maize, sesame, millet and domestic cereals are spread in the sun ; the luxurious odour of the gum market, where sweet-scented gums and sandalwood are sold ; and the subtle pleasures of the nostril in the quarter of the perfume sellers who dispense precious attars and frankincense, myrrh and cassia. But, mixed with all, is the pungency and unpleasantness of the dust, which is blown into your eyes by playful gusts, and finds its way into your mouth and into your clothes. It is amazing what a desert breeze can do, and how hot a wind can be !

As I have indicated, all the trades, as in most Oriental towns, are separated one from another, the jewellers in one souk, the tent-makers in another, the weavers of *dammur* or cotton-cloth in another, the grocers in another, and so on, through the gamut of merchants and artificers. It simplifies shopping, stultifies competition considerably, and is undoubtedly a good thing, though in some cases, as in the butchers' souk, it can be







NATIVE POTTERY MARKET, OMDURMAN.

[Morhig-

rather appalling. One butcher's shop is dreadful enough : but to have a whole row of butchers in huts displaying raw meat and offal is enough to sicken the strongest stomach. The most pleasant souk of all is perhaps that of the silversmiths, where a gentle tink-a-tink on the small anvil tells of the craftsman at his work. Here filigree *zarfs* can be bought, the egg-cup receptacles for coffee-cups ; heavy bangles, khalkhals or anklets ; elaborate filigree boxes and earrings—though the work is not so good as it was in the days before the Mahdi. Or perhaps the narrow souk of the bead-sellers, with its golden shade varied by sword-thrusts of fierce white sunlight, is more fascinating, where rows of necklaces hang in gaudy brightness, beads of amber, coral and silver among the rest. Hither come travellers from all parts of the Sudan to bargain for trinkets to carry back to their womenfolk, and merchants to lay in their stock of currency beads according to the fashion of the moment ; and long and patient are the negotiations, as in all the East.

Then there are booths where one can buy pottery of simple and beautiful shape, hippopotamus hide whips, beaded leather fringes—a whole

and sufficient dress for a Sudanese beauty ; or leather Koran cases finely and patiently tooled : a hundred temptations for those who have a taste for native curios.

But no one begs from you. Tourists fresh from Egypt, accustomed to hear the very stones cry out " Bakshish ! " cannot marvel enough over this strange stillness. Smiles they get in plenty from the good-tempered black faces around them, but the beggarly whining and obsequiousness that make progress through a bazaar in an Egyptian town so painful are nowhere apparent, and one thanks Heaven and the Sudan Government for it with great sincerity.

To-day, in spite of the fact that there is hardly an inhabitant of Omdurman who could not tell you of some horrible thing, either endured or committed by him and his in the past reign of terror, there is a general air of prosperity and cheerfulness about Omdurman. Doubtless, were a general licence once again extended to cruelty and rapine, the very black innocent who grins so ingenuously and kindly would straightway turn into a fiend in human shape—but in restraint he wins your affection.



The natives must be prosperous in Omdurman, for even a working man will pay a preposterous price for his wife. The cost of getting married has gone up since the days of the Mahdi. The Mohammedan custom at marriage is that a certain sum is agreed upon as the bride's dowry, and is provided, not by her father, but by the prospective bridegroom. Half of this is handed over to her people before marriage, and is usually spent in wedding festivities, the other half can be claimed by the wife if her husband divorces her. In the times before the Mahdi, owing to the extravagance with which bridal rejoicings were carried out, and the heavy sums demanded as dowries by the fathers of marriageable maidens, the very poor found it difficult to marry. The Mahdi promptly ordered that the dowry should be fixed at one pound for a virgin, and ten shillings for a woman who had been divorced ; so that, although marriage was a more expensive commodity in the Sudan than in Great Britain, it was not impossible. But now a bitter complaint is being made that the price is getting high again. A well-to-do labouring man may have to pay as much as £15 to £30 for a bride. This does not apply to the southern

provinces. A friend of mine possessed a Dinka servant. One morning the man left and did not come back till the next day. She sent for him and remonstrated with him. He explained that he had been obliged to go to Omdurman, where his mother and wife lived, in order to enforce peace. His wife apparently had refused to cook, and needed to be brought to order by means of the stick. "It is very sad for me," he explained, "because she was not a cheap wife. She cost me five pounds!"

So much for a passer-by's impressions of the city of Omdurman, a strange mixture of ruin and squalor on the one hand, and prosperity and commerce on the other. The new city is rising Phoenix-like from the ashes of the Dervish stronghold. Without exaggeration, it may be said that he who goes to Omdurman with open eyes will see the whole work of the English in the Sudan epitomised, for in those few square miles on the west bank of the Nile he has a visible commentary on the past and future of the country.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS

THE Sudanese is a rhymester rather than a poet. He makes rhymes and rhythms on every possible occasion, but, like all of Arab blood or partly Arab blood, he is seldom capable of producing lofty lyrical poetry. The boatmen, as they tug together at a rope, or pull their oars through the water, make chanteys, but these are rarely imaginative or poetical in the Western sense of the words. The highest flight of their genius carries them no further than the time-honoured comparison of a lovely maiden's face to the full moon, or the platitudes which liken her carriage to that of the gazelle. Majnoun-like, the poet bewails the absence of the loved one in terms of distraction, but there is rarely a simple and lovely phrase to tell of love in its higher form or grief in its more poignant degree. The Arab seldom



personifies Nature, or chants of the beauties of dawn, of the skies of sunset, or of green places—like most children of Nature, he is too close to her, too dependent upon her for his physical needs, to sing of her. House-dwellers can sing of the delights of the open air, but it would not enter the brain of a gypsy to do so, though he would fret beneath a roof. Similarly, the Arab times his night-watches by the stars, travels by them for lack of a compass, knows their positions and their names—but writes no lyrics to them. Love and religion move him to song first and foremost, then come songs relating to expeditions, to comforts, to the deeds of such-and-such a one, or mere chanteys and refrains. These chanteys are more often impromptu. If you listen to the boatmen, you will find that one will invent rhythmic lines, to which the others chant a refrain in chorus. Such lines may be prompted by the work in hand, by a person present, or by any event that is taking place or has just taken place. A Government inspector has often to listen to his praises in one of these impromptu chants, and sometimes they are used to taunt or chaff the person against whom they are directed. A certain English official had

## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 101

occasion to flog a Berberine for some misdemeanour; and the culprit, instead of bearing the punishment without a cry, for most Sudanese take a pride in enduring pain without flinching, wept and shrieked, "I cannot bear it, effendim!" The other natives, who were Jaalin, were so disgusted at his cowardice and the disgrace that he was bringing on his tribe, that they crowded around to jeer at him, and begged that he might be flogged harder. After that day they made a song of many verses about the incident, with "I cannot bear it, effendim!" as a refrain. The Berberine, unable to endure the chaff, went privately to the composer of the song and offered him some money if he would abstain from singing it. His tormentor pocketed the money and promised to comply; and the song was stopped, but was succeeded by another in which, to the unfortunate Berberine's further horror, the poet ironically celebrated the way in which the coward had bribed him to cover his shame!

It is a pity that a serious collection is not made of the folk-lore and songs of the Sudan. One English official furnished me with some rough translations of poems taken down by him, and

from these I have selected a few representative songs, and one or two interesting for topical reasons. Of such topical interest, for example, is the hymn of Abd el Kader Wad el Habuba, the fanatic responsible for the murder of Mr. Scott-Moncrieff. As I mentioned in a former chapter, this religious ruffian was eventually caught and hanged.

THE HYMN OF ABD EL KADER WAD EL  
HABUBA

Lords of the host of Heaven, Hassan and Hussein,  
With our Lord Abbas, of the faith supporters firm,  
And I glorify my God my establisher,  
He Who forgiveth our iniquities.

My desire of God is that I may be improved,  
Of Him I beg that all infidels may perish  
'Neath the Moslem's feet. The Prophet with kohl-stained \* eyes  
And separated teeth, of stature medium ;  
He who pardons, and is unsurpassed, walks humbly :  
He is gentle and most merciful. My people,  
Lo, I have found his footprints ! Be ye strong, be bold !  
Now is the time for deeds—for the naked sword.

The poor rejoice and the prosperous are ashamed,  
Struck dumb with dismay at news of our uprising.  
Five years have I conceived and pondered my design—  
Unmindful of the world—for 'stablishing the faith.

\* The custom of beautifying the eyes with antimony or kohl is much in use among the Arabs. Mohammed is supposed to have had a separation between the two front upper teeth, and this is supposed to be lucky.



## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 103

The Prophet, from his birth of thoughtful mind and mien,  
Of spotless purity and fertile in resource !  
Should I be in distress, Messiah to my aid  
Sends Henein, Uhud, Badr, Khandag and Tebuk.

The friends of our Mahdi, the Prophets following,  
The band of the twelve hundred hastens to our aid.  
I put my trust in God, and will not hesitate  
—Wherever it may lead—from following my fate.  
Fear is calamitous and a dread ill as well  
That casts its victims out of Heaven into Hell.

Our race is nigh extinct. You ask if this is so ?  
Seek, examine its state : return to me, then go  
Shout aloud the Word.\* At best you are called a fool !  
That without love your nearest comes not, is the rule.

God will destroy His foes with strength of sword and spear,  
But that which is ordained happens. I will not fear.  
Fear is the final ill, casting the mortal down  
Into abysmal Hell from Heaven's crown.

Some of the lines are obscure, and have been rendered literally. Of the same order of poem is one addressed to Ali Dinar, the Sultan of Darfur. As a piece of fulsome flattery it is not without humour, for Ali Dinar is a negro tyrant of the first water. (See Chapter XVIII).

\* There is no god but God, and Mahommed is His Apostle,

## THE SULTAN ALI DINAR

The Sultan acts according to Law and Justice;  
 He requiteth all service, like to the lightning.  
 Aflame in dark heavens his great worth have I seen,  
 Mine own eyes have seen him seek out the oppressed.

Just Sultan, your land is the fugitive's refuge!  
 High and unblemished is the pride of your lineage;  
 Far and wide is your excellence famed throughout the world,  
 In Syria, Yemen, in Taifhar and Kufa.

The Sultan is just; by God is his strength increased;  
 The reed-pipes go before, the rifles are aligned; \*  
 The light of God shines forth the Sultan's path to guide,  
 He who doeth wrong is instantly put to death.

A characteristic feature of these poems is the introduction of a line used as a refrain without much relation to the sense of the text. As in the following:

## THE SECRET LOVERS

When the tale of our passions spread abroad—  
     (Sweet-smelling oil of cloves!)  
 Little recked I of the shame of it all—  
     The scandal of our loves.  
 I went to the man who held me in thrall.

\* Ali Dinar has a personal following of about 5,000 men, and a standing army.

## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 105

Few of the love poems are simple, but those that are simple are the best. The following love poem pleased me on account of its naïveté. The girl is supposed to be singing in the first part; her lover reassures her in the last lines.

### LOVE SONG

O bring me to his fragrant presence,  
For the breeze at early morning wafts  
Me-ward sweet memories of my love :  
My head droops, tears fall upon my breast.

The chatter and the petty gossip  
Oppress my mind, but pass unrecked of.  
He is tall and dark of colour. I  
Am his alone, in spite of kindred.

Will the great folks' anger never cease ?

My beloved is tall; his voice is sweet !  
Eastern lightning, bidding the sleepers waken,  
Let night be shield, and away we will flee  
If God will ! to Whom I make my plea.

They say I'm poor. 'My love's content,' I answer.  
So I am his, we might sell wood together.  
Let him be harsh, ill-treat me or abuse me !  
Am I the only village girl affected ?

*Her Lover :*

O Daughter of the Great ! dear thou art to me !  
Little one ! None shall ever share thee with me !  
And this is indeed the truth ; I love but thee.



In contrast to this, here is a poem full of more stereotyped phrases. It is confused for Western minds by the abrupt interpolations which seem to break the sense.

#### TO HIS MISTRESS

A camel of the Bisharin,\* abroad with head-rope loosened ;  
Ever with sad, reproachful mien I listen for her calling,  
Nor after shall she show resentment—pleasure brings peace !

No slim gazelle can outvie the grace of her supple movement.  
By my life, O Sekina,† say why am I thus in bondage ?  
(The while the light gazelle has flown from the quarter of Umrein,  
And with anxious care his mother tends and watches his desire,  
A pasture green watered anew by the tears of the watcher.)

For oh, the desire to be with her ! the summons of friendship,  
'Midst the jealous lies of detractors, happy the glamour of youth.

O thou, my beloved gazelle, wandering in the valley !  
O traveller to Dueim,‡ see, there is my beloved !  
Your dwelling, O my Temanin,§ is distant—peace be upon you,  
On your smooth soft hair and shining teeth, blue lips|| and gentle  
speech,

Your well-turned neck, erect upon beautiful firm round shoulders,  
Your gestures of regal fire and cushioned softness of bosom !  
You wander afield, all unheeding the cry of your lovers,  
High above the great ones, in your hands all gladness and pleasure.

\* A nomad tribe.

† A numerical designation.

‡ El Dueim, a town below Khartoum on the White Nile.

§ Temanin, *lit.* Eighty. Every letter has a numerical equivalent in Arabic ; hence Eighty may mean Fatma, as the letters when added give 80.

|| Sudanese girls tattoo their lips blue.

## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 107

Pure and high is her lineage, her graces baffle description,  
Great the charm of her discourse, her scent than the *gasis* \* sweeter,  
As Mecca to the pilgrim is the healing of her glances,  
Precious as corn in a famine year—death better than parting with  
her ;

Fair as the garden of El Nur,† free as the Ansar of Firka ; ‡  
Like silk to the touch is her skin, fragrant the balm of her breath ;  
Long-stemmed and flower-tipped as the herbage down by the river.  
A gazelle roaming free in the desert. Who could replace her ?  
Her house is in Faj el Madudi, where gentle breezes play.  
A necklace beyond compare strung with jewels that none can buy,  
Armed the strength of her escort, in bright gold are his wages paid.  
Queen of my slumbers ! daintily-clad, breath-giving Elixir !  
The shady tree of Abd-el-Aziz before the tarifa,  
As a branch peeled smooth and straight are the flowing lines of  
her form ;

Beautiful is my love, nor unreasonable, nor wayward,  
Kind and modest in manner. How complete her description ?  
Slender her grace of neck, on the curving line of her shoulders,  
Her skin has the sheen of gold, as the moon in heaven her face.  
O wide soft eyes of the gazelle, wandering in the desert !

This kind of rhapsody is capable of being prolonged indefinitely, and is sung to a monotonous chant accompanied by the daraboukeh. With

\* A foreign perfume sold in Omdurman. It is called *gasis* (priest) because there is a picture of a Greek priest on the bottle.

† Formerly a garden in Khartoum made by El Nur el Khabir, a wealthy native.

‡ The Baggara horsemen of the Khalifa were known as Ansar, or helpers. Firka is about a day north of Dongola. One of the most successful Dervish battles was fought here, and the Ansar brought back much loot from it.

regard to the Elixir of the poem, the actual Arabic is Al Aksir, referring to a fabulous tree, which had the power of turning objects brought into contact with it into gold. Such a tree is supposed to grow in the Sudan. Seventy years ago a great religious Sheikh named Seyyid el Hassan el Morghani lived in Kassala. A certain man came to him, declaring that he had found the tree and had taken a branch of it. The Sheikh asked him to bring the branch, and when it was brought he destroyed it, lest its magical properties should cause dissension and strife. The man sought the tree for the second time, and brought back a branch, but the Sheikh becoming magically aware of it, found the branch and threw it away also. fearing that the possession of gold would work the ruin of the tribe. Then the man took a friend and went off for the third time, resolved to get possession of a branch for himself. But on this occasion, though they searched everywhere, they could not find the tree. There is also a story that an Italian, travelling in Kordofan, heard of the existence of the tree in the neighbourhood. When he went to look at the spot, he found that it was growing on an inaccessible rock. He contrived



## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 109

to form a pulley, and let a man down, but the story has it that the rope broke and the man was badly injured.\*

A more sincere poem is one I have named " Boy's Love."

To-night is my soul possessed, by love I am overpowered,  
Sometimes with quick stab of steel, sometimes with blister of flame.  
The seed that was sown in my heart has quickened and flowered;  
A lover's strength yearns to his love, shall not mine do the same ?

Should I visit her by day, fear of scandal is her whim ;  
If I go to her by night, but for slumber does she care.  
Can I divine her wishes ? Can a man the ocean swim ?  
O true wives, live loving women, ye are rare, ye are rare !

From a child none e'er made me carry water from the well ;  
A boy, I wore maidens' rings in the Mangala fashion † :  
She parts the curtains ; beckons me ; my heart begins to swell !  
She thinks I am still a child, not knowing love or passion.

\* Cf. R. F. Burton, 491st Night, *Adventures of Bulukiya*. " There-  
in were marvellous trees whose like he had never seen in his wander-  
ings, for their blossoms were in hue like as gold. He landed and  
walked about for diversion until it was nightfall, when the flowers  
began to shine through the gloom like stars. Seeing this sight, he  
marvelled and said, ' Assuredly the flowers of this land are of  
those which wither under the sun and fall to earth, where the winds  
smite them, and they gather under the rocks and become alixir,  
which the people collect and thereof make gold.' " Al Iksir means  
an essence, also the Philosopher's Stone.

† Rings in the Mongalla fashion, i.e. at the top of the ear.

The next song is a pastoral. One can almost hear the lowing of the herds as one reads it.

To-night the thunder in the South has possessed me,  
With keen remembrance of my dear trusting love.  
When night grows chill I hold her clasped against my breast;  
O wretched one! Who can aid, save God above!

To-night the South has loosed the fleecy clouds aloft,  
Recalling my kindred, distant, far apart,  
Small and white are their teeth; their skins are fair and soft,  
The Lord is come, and the lover must depart.

The vision of the South conjures before my eyes  
The mountains where safe from ill the young sheep rove,  
A striped-necked lamb for milk unto its mother hies,  
I have none save you! But one glance craves my love.

All day and through the night I must my vigil keep,  
Still my aching heart nor rest nor solace finds;  
Watching the grazing flocks, my cattle and my sheep,  
How can we express the torment of our minds?

The day has heard my songs, all night awake I've lain,  
Friendless and alone I pass along my way.

In the dawn I found her, and sought to ease my pain.  
Spurning my embrace, fearful she turned away.\*

A more virile note is sounded in the camel songs.  
Here are three of them.

\* Literally, "When with her she said 'Consider that I belong to a relative'"—when tribal custom would not permit him to touch her.



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

JUR GRANARY IN A SMALL VILLAGE NEAR MVOLO.

(Showing the fine basket-work made by the tribe, and how the grain is kept on a raised platform in order to prevent loss by the attacks of white ants, rats, mice, etc.)





I

How often on a well-fed camel of my own  
Gaily I have ridden bearing my keen sword !  
My house is from the houses of my brothers known,  
Food for guests is ever ready at my board.

II

A camel easily to ride,  
A maiden to my breast to strain,  
Luscious meat with " basal " \* fried,  
Or herding camels in the plain ;  
Tell me, you who have made the test,  
Which of these pleasures is the best ?

We who have tried them all can say  
—Herd camels, on a cloudy day  
When elder ones the darkness fear  
And slow towards the young ones move,  
And you the camel music hear,  
Than this there is no better love !

III

Camels with thick-furred necks oft have I ridden  
Over country where wild beasts dare not remain ;  
Never by a comrade have I yet been chidden ;  
Nor, may I lose my speech !—treated with disdain.  
Camels with clean fore-feet, legs of proportion rare,  
Rough desert country where lions terrify.  
No one of my comrades will brave the risks I dare !  
Should I bow to scorn ? Let who will reply.

“ The Song of Abu Surhan ” contains allusions  
difficult to understand, but they were probably

\* Onion.

full of sly innuendo at the time the song was composed. Abu Surhan was the Sheikh of all the Abadi Arabs north of Assuan. He had a son called Hassan, and was sent by the Khalifa to Redjaf to get slaves. He was a powerful Sheikh, and it was thought that the Khalifa was not altogether pleased with him. Be that as it may, he did not return until Omdurman had been taken and the Khalifa had fallen. Ten days after his arrival he was killed by one of his tribe.

#### THE SONG OF ABU SURHAN

They saddle his camel with a kur ; \*  
 Abu Surhan is clothed in dammur, †  
 Nor drinks merissa nor eats cooked foods,  
 For the pride of Jeddah merchants' goods ‡  
 Has fled, and the house in ruins fell,  
 While the world seems overturned as well.

Abu Surhan's tarbush is awry,  
 His temper is vile, nor brooks reply ;  
 He lights candles, at the outer gate  
 He spreads out mats for his guests to wait.

They saddled a camel thick of neck,  
 For to Darfur he is off on trek,  
 Seeking no Dar Fertitawi § slaves,  
 But the coal-black Ab Turruma braves.

\* Native saddle. † Cotton cloth. ‡ I.e. his slave or wife.

§ *Fertitawi*. The natives of Western Kordofan and the Bahr-el-Ghazal.



## SUDANESE SONGS AND SINGERS 113

From the saddle pendant tassels stray,  
To his blameless love he wends his way.  
Nor 'tis mere gossip that I'm giving—  
That in Es Saier\* he's now living!

A poet responsible for many of the songs that live on the lips of the people is Hardallu of the Aulad Abu Sin in Kassala. He is of the Shukria tribe, formerly very powerful, as its territory extended into Abyssinia. The head of the family is Abdullah Abu Sin, to-day a comparatively poor man, and its leading members now live between the Atbara and the Blue Nile. Two of his songs run as follows:—

### I

How often have I swaggered in  
The famous mart of Abu Sin;  
Many the camel I have tired,  
By thought of necklaced beauty fired!  
My back's now bent and I am "broke,"  
Picked clean as any camel's knee.  
I needs must ride upon a moke,  
Nor does e'en that belong to me.

### II

O bird on the wing, bear my greetings to Umara; †  
Tell him that our land is now ruled by the Baggara,  
The sweet-scented maiden who 'neath curtains spent her days  
Has been plucked from their shelter and walks the scorched ways.

\* Es Saier was the name of the slave whom the Khalifa made the governor of the prison in Omdurman. The prison became known as Es Saier after this man, whose cruelties were notorious.

† Neufeld and many others were imprisoned there.

As the prey of El Hurrani,\* fearful you elope,  
 Your wealth of hair flows loose o'er the shoulders' downward slope ;  
 When banished from her sight, from my work all virtue slips.  
 O the joy of her speech, and the moisture of her lips !

I will end the selection by two songs. One is a ditty that may be heard any day in Omdurman as the women bend to rub their durra between the grinding stones. It is also interesting as containing several Nuba words. The other is an ironical complaint from a young man gone to seek his fortune in order to pay the necessary dowry for his bride.

#### THE SONG OF THE FIRST WIFE

O thou Moon, do not set ;  
 Let me see my belov'd,  
 Who left me at sunset  
 In charge of my kindred.  
 O thou Moon, remain clear ;  
 My country is distant,  
 And my man has left me,  
 And gone to his own love (i.e. his countrywoman).

#### WHAT THE LOVE OF WOMEN IS

A man left his betrothed and went on a journey, singing :

"My mother cries, 'O Lord, Who knowest my state !'  
 My aunt declaims, 'O thou Re-Uniter of People !'  
 My sister sobs, 'Alas ! My brother and my dear !'  
 But my betrothed says, 'He's gone to get me money !'"

\* A famous hunter.

## CHAPTER X

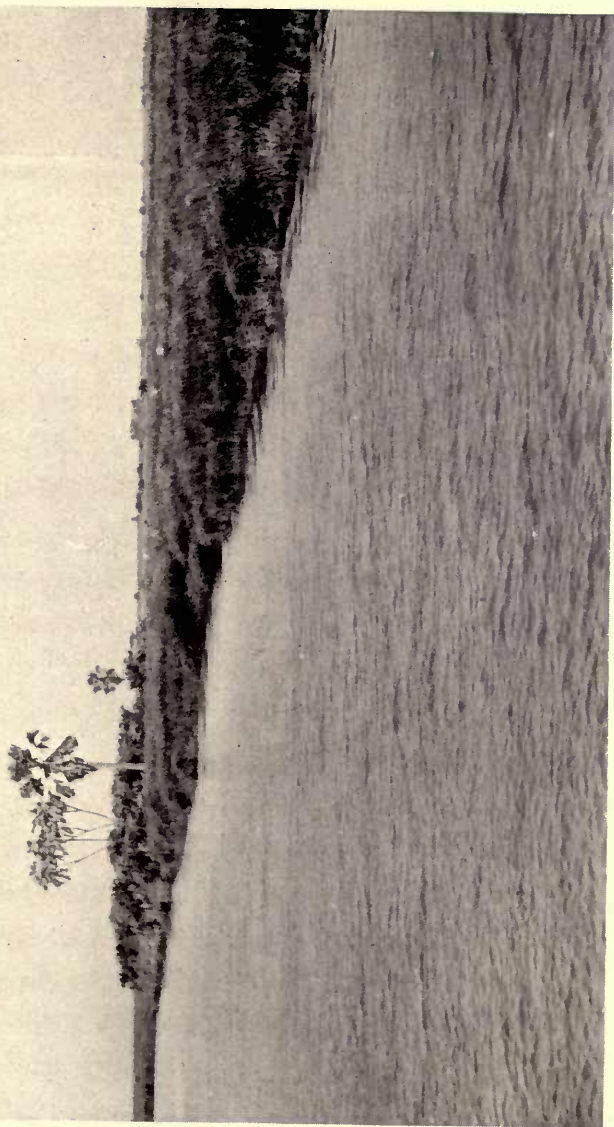
### TO THE SUDD AND BACK

**I**N the Sudan a great deal is heard about "suddite." What is it? and why is the question an important one?

"Sudd" or "sadd" means literally "obstruction," and in the Sudan it is generally applied to the river-weed which, massing itself together in the Upper Nile, forms a vast expanse of swamp, a veritable inland Sargasso Sea, a waving, lush-green forest of reeds and water growth some thirty-five thousand square miles in extent. Think of it! Thirty-five thousand square miles of hopeless swamp. Through this sudd region the White Nile travels for three hundred miles, and in the rainy season large islands of "sudd" break away, and, floating down stream, choke up the narrow channel of the river. So serious does this obstruction become, that river steamers have been



blocked in for weeks at a time, until a way has been hewn out for them. To lie stagnant in a temperature resembling the hottest room in the Savoy Baths, surrounded by a flat eternity of swamp swarming with crocodiles and murderous with mosquitoes ; to be running short of food ; and to swelter by day at the slow task of cutting a way through, is a form of torture sufficient to turn the brain. This sluggish octopus, the sudd, could do this. It sucked the blood of its victims with its standing army of millions of mosquitoes ; it drove them crazy by its eternal monotony ; it put its green tentacles around them and held them fast. The sudd is the slow monster that strangles the river, that blocks the highway, that drinks the water that should irrigate the thirsty land. There is a brave force of engineers constantly attacking it, and so successfully that, owing to their efforts, the waterways are rarely blocked as hopelessly as of yore. A fleet of dredgers is always at work. Here for nine months out of the twelve they stay in this abomination of desolation, these English engineers, year in, year out ; only seeing a white face from time to time, at grips with the octopus, patient and enduring, scientific and persevering.



A SUDD-SCAPE.





Men like these, though no one ever hears of them, make one proud of the race.

But recently a new aspect has been given to the sudd. Up to the present it has been wholly malignant. It is now possible that a service may be wrung from it. A certain German diplomatist, Herr von Rath, was the inspired originator of the idea. The steamers that go up from Khartoum to Gondokor and the Lado and back cannot use coal, for the price of transport renders the expense prohibitive. Hence, at the fuelling stations placed at intervals along the White Nile, you will see neatly piled stacks of wood placed on the bank, and this "wooding" is a process to which you will soon get accustomed if you journey southwards. It is full of disadvantages; indeed, it is chiefly disadvantages. Wood-fuel takes a long time to get on board; it occupies a great deal of space when it is on board, and it eats up the timber of the country. Now, it occurred to this Teutonic genius that, could the mass of weed be dried and prepared for the burning, the sudd, which was useless, might just as well provide the fuel instead of the trees, which were useful; accordingly, with the grateful approval of the Sudan

Government, experiments were duly carried out. Some tons of the tall weeds were cut down, dried in the sun, subjected to a disintegrating process, and converted into neat briquettes about six inches long, three broad, and one deep; the handiest little objects imaginable. The heating qualities of this "suddite," as it was christened, are, according to its inventors, nearly two-thirds that of coal, while the briquettes themselves have a density of four-fifths of coal.

Hence a company was formed, with the result that I quote in extenso from that well-informed little paper "The Near East."

"As a result of the experiments which have been carried on in Europe and the Sudan during the last three or four years, and also the satisfactory manner in which the fuel has emerged from the various trials to which it has been subjected, the Sudan Government have, we understand, definitely granted a valuable concession, conferring a monopoly for the manufacture of solid fuel from sudd, for a period of seventeen years. Under the terms of the concession, the Government are to receive 10 per cent. rebate on all fuel supplied at the price charged to the public consumers. The Government are further to receive a dead

rent of £250 per annum, or a commission of 5 per cent. on the net profits of the company, whichever shall be the greater. The Government have allocated to the concessionaires the first 150 kilometres of the Bahr-el-Gebel, starting from Lake No, in which they are to have the sole right of cutting papyrus, um-soof, and other aquatic growth constituting what is commonly known as sudd. The Government further give a site of 25 feddans of land for the purpose of erecting a factory, etc., in any place which may be selected by the concessionaires, where such land may be available. The concession provides that the concessionaires shall supply the needs of the Government services in preference to private consumers, and stipulates for a minimum output of double that amount."

It was upon a steamer specially chartered by this company for the purpose of choosing a site for the factory, that I went in 1911 as a passenger.

In the manufacture of suddite I had no immediate interest, but the expedition was to take a route different to that of the ordinary Government steamers, and I was curious to see that floating uninhabitable wilderness of weeds beyond Lake No, to go down the Bahr-el-Ghazal—usually



forbidden to tourists, and to see a little of wild Africa, for of this the civilisation of the Northern Sudan could tell me nothing.

. . . . .

Perhaps the best manner of describing that journey to the sudd is to give it almost as it stands in my diary. If there are trivialities recorded, I must beg forgiveness. I fancy that trivialities will convey as much of the atmosphere of a place as a series of facts, sometimes; and this book does not aim at conveying facts as much as impressions.

The steamer chosen for the expedition was the *Cephalonia*, and she lay just below the high river bank in the Blue Nile, by the garden of the Slavery Department, which happens to be one of the best gardens of Khartoum. The Department concerns itself, not with providing labour, but with stopping the slave-traffic. The *Cephalonia* was herself scarcely more than a glorified nugger, with a wheel-box astern; and, like all the upstream vessels, she was attended by two satellites, one on either side—flat-bottomed nuggers, or native boats. To get on board it was necessary first to thread one's way through a group of donkeys

and camels under the lebbakh trees above ; then to descend the perilously steep bank ; then to cross by a plank to the attendant nugger ; to pick one's footsteps through bales, a menagerie of animals, sleeping men, wood, saddles, and every imaginable utensil, till one arrived at the *Cephalaria* herself. The other nugger, reached acrobatically from the steamer, was a comfortable barge-like structure of considerable age, judging from the way that she crumbled under a shock. She contained supplementary sleeping accommodation and an upper deck. She had pretensions to respectability, a semi-genteel look, as it were. The first nugger, on the other hand, was a mere maid-of-all-work, a slatternly Martha, dedicated to the humbler uses. The broad bosom of her deck accommodated seven sheep, two donkeys, a cage full of pigeons, three Sudani women and about ten men, in addition to which wood fuel was added later on, to the discomfort of the unfortunate animals. I felt sincerely sorry for the menagerie. There they stood, day by day, hardly moving, their heads dejectedly drooped in the burning sun, for there was no merciful shade for them. It was sad, too, to see the number of

sheep gradually diminishing, as one by one they were dedicated to the knife or the cook. When we returned to Khartoum at the end of our trip, one solitary sheep was left, gazing at the skin of the last-sacrificed brother.

The two younger women, comely Sudani girls, and the older woman, discarded their blue tobes as soon as we had left Khartoum well behind us, and kept only the scantiest of draperies about their hips. Their skins were black and shining—I often admired the bare back of one girl as she bent over her cooking; it might have served as a model for a sculptor. Their hair was braided in the orthodox manner into hundreds of little plaits, only a few hairs going to each plait, and the whole plenteously besmeared with grease.

We left Khartoum in a fresh breeze, for it was a cool winter day, the thermometer on deck standing at 86 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. Past Tuti Island we went on the down stream, and at three o'clock rounded Moghren Point, where one can still see a mass of masonry, the unfinished beginnings of a palace projected by a former Egyptian Governor-General at the meeting of the two Niles. The encounter of the two streams is



very marked, for they do not mix at once, and the opaque water of the White Nile is at once distinguished from the clearer stream. From this point they flow together down to the Delta.

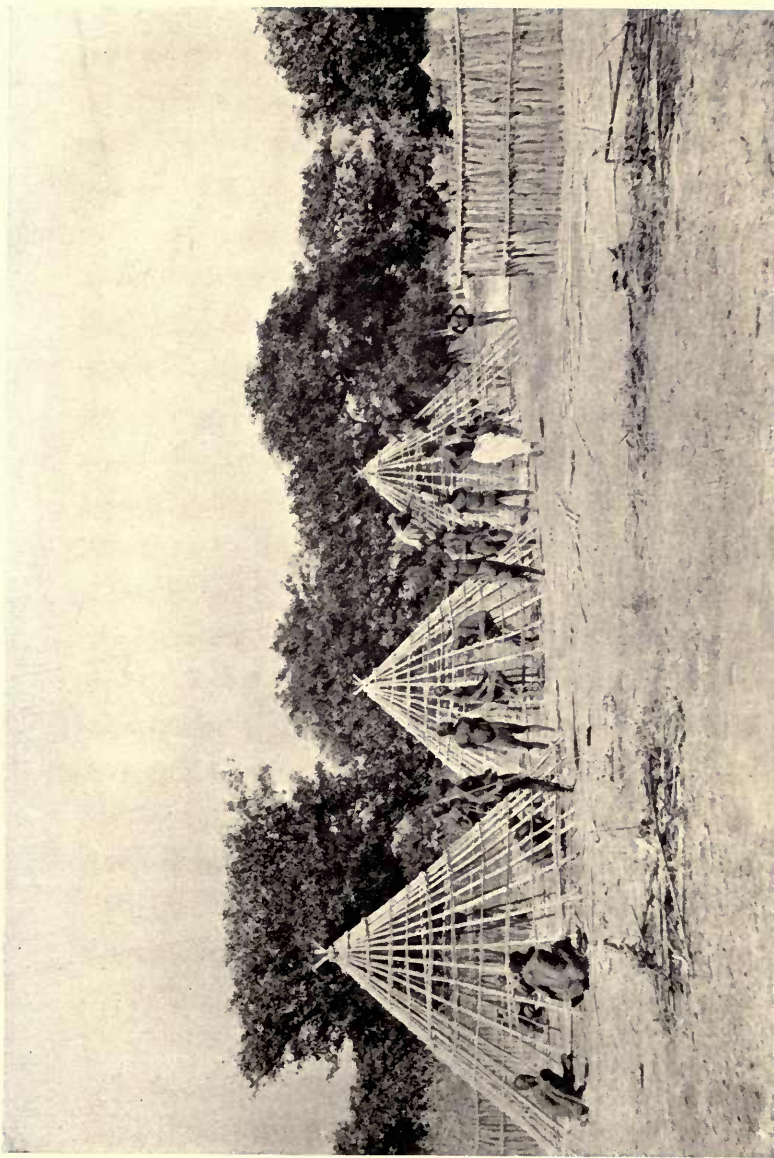
Our steamer now ploughed its way southward instead of northward, and we were fairly started on our journey up the White Nile against the current. The river is very wide, and the shores are flat and green with lupins, among which ants move that prove, when examined through glasses, to be half-naked women bending over their toil. I have said the shores are flat—the country beyond them is flat too, stretching away interminably to the deserts on the horizon ; a uniformity scarcely broken by a few scrub-like trees. Seen in the generous sunlight and pure air, this vast platitude is not unattractive. The wideness of the unbounded horizon, the shining bosom of the great river, these give a sense of free breathing and the joy of illumined space. Here and there low green islands just rise above the water level, and flocks of wild ducks whirr into the air with their own peculiar, horizontal flight.

The bird-life of the Sudan is increasingly wonderful the farther south one travels. It is indeed

the territory of the birds. In the Upper River, where human beings can only subsist precariously, birds of every species live and die in their millions. With field-glasses one can never be dull: there are always the birds—a commonwealth of infinite variety. For them Nature provides abundantly; the insect life, the fish life, the grub life, the seed life are all a vast larder for her spoiled children the birds.

The next day, February 10, still saw the river at its widest—the same expanse of shining river and flat featureless banks, save here and there where a village of tukls arose. These tukls resemble nothing so much as a collection of straw beehives, except that the beehive is better built. Their construction is simple. The conical straw roof is made first, and this is lifted, with much laughter and shouting and singing—for noise drives evil spirits away—on a rough circular palisade of sticks. The rest is added afterwards in much the same fashion as that in which a bird builds her nest.

Our journey was enlivened at about 8 a.m., while we were at breakfast on deck, by the smouldering of the wood casing enclosing the smoke-stack.



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

MEN OF THE JUR TRIBE BUILDING HUTS (TUKLS) AT RUMBEK IN THE BAHR-EL-GHAZAL.





It was evident that we were in danger of being burnt out, so axes were brought, and jagged holes hewn quickly in the casing, from which smoke poured forth. But under the direction of Abdu, a Berberine genius who was our Admirable Crichton throughout, the men brought water, which they hurled by cocoa-tins full on the conflagration through the apertures. A little before three in the afternoon we passed Jebel Arashkol. It is a high barren mass of rocks, with several distinct peaks, and has a volcanic appearance. The highest peak is known as the Jebel Abd el Daim, or rather the *Gebel* Abd-el-Daim, for the J is pronounced G in the Sudan. The shore was so distant on either side that, to get a clear vision of any object, we were obliged to use strong field-glasses. At one village, Amara, I think, the villagers were sheep-washing. I watched the process for some time, as the reluctant sheep were half-carried, half-dragged out into the river for their bath ; their attendants standing waist-deep in the water. This would have been a highly dangerous proceeding farther up the Nile ; but crocodiles rarely venture beyond Dueim nowadays.

Our progress was very slow. It is a drowsy

business, this ploughing up-stream at midday. There is the constant thud of the engine as the boat moves in answer to the wheel of the *reis* in his little shelter above, the droning song of a *bahari* somewhere in the nugger dragged alongside, and a sun which blisters the paint. The natives converse in low tones, the banks are too far away and too flat to be interesting, and all you can do is to join in the general siesta.

Approaching El Dueim, which is one hundred and twenty-five miles from Khartoum, the Nile gradually narrows, till at Dueim itself it is only a mile across. We arrived at Dueim in that magical hour which is "between the dog and the wolf." The after-glow was still keeping rosy little clouds captive in a long vista of pure green sky, while night rose from the horizon in heavy clouds, and the full moon had already made a white and tremulous highway across the river. Shadows and freshness stole up together after the long white glare of the day. The *Cephalonia* came to a standstill as close to the shallow shore as possible, yet not near enough to throw a board from the nugger to the strand. A native or two waded to land, the moon making white ripples about their



feet, and passed up the milky shore into the little town, which was dark against the sky. A perfume stole across to us as we waited to see what would happen. It was a subtle, pervading breath of spices, which, like a half-told tale, stirred the imagination and materialised the romance of the dusky and silent African town before us.

All at once we became aware of voices on the water's edge. A group of idlers—Dongolawi for the most part—was ready to convey us across to the land. Some of them were stripped to the waist, displaying torsos like that of Hercules. Their shining teeth, as they smiled up at us, and their outstretched arms, brawny and black, were the invitation. For a piastre or two we were borne on their shoulders through the water, across a strip of clay, and set down on the sandy shore beyond.

They call Dueim hideous who know it by daylight, but by night it is strange and beautiful. In the moonlight we walked down one wide, straight street after another, sweet-smelling and paved with sand; where gums, grain, incense, and precious woods were exposed for sale in deep baskets of woven halfa grass. The shops were

unlit, save where here and there a merchant had kindled a solitary candle in a shamadan or glass globe, but even this was hardly necessary with the tropical moon sailing up like a golden lamp. The town was very silent. A few white-clad natives conversed together in low tones where they met in twos and threes, and at one corner there was a click of dominoes as some players in a little mud café mixed their pieces. We endeavoured to buy some of the incense that perfumed the streets, but not knowing what it was called in Arabic, our efforts were in vain. At last an obliging merchant who sat on his heels with a friend outside his shop, looking like an ebony statue swathed in ivory draperies, made a gesture of perfect comprehension ; and, vanishing into the shadows of a neighbouring mud house, reappeared later with a bottle inscribed "Ess Bouquet !" At last, the resourceful Abdu appearing like a Genie of the Lamp, we bought what we had wished—rock-like lumps of incense that looked like toffee which has been played with by a little boy. It contained all manner of gums and spices, he told us.

Another moon-bathed, silent street brought us

to some tukls. I looked in at one faintly illumined interior, and found the arrangements of the simplest. A man was brewing some coffee in a brown earthenware pot over a small charcoal fire, and, smiling politely, bade us enter. The furniture consisted only of an angareb and a pitcher or two, but the whole was spotlessly clean, for these riverine people are scrupulous in the care of their persons, and there are no fleas in the Sudan.

At last we found ourselves back on the shore again, where sacks and bales and cases of all sizes were heaped. They contained gum, simsim (sesame), senna, durra, powdered *fool Sudani* or ground-nuts, and grains of various kinds; for Dueim, till the railway from El Obeid was finished this year, was the jumping-off place for Kordofan, the highroad to that richest territory of the Sudan. From it caravans set forth, to return with produce which was shipped for the North; and to Dueim, in the old times, Baggara slave-hunters brought their gangs of hapless captives.

Since January of 1912 there is the swifter means of transport, and Dueim must gradually fall asleep on its sandy river shore. Formerly, camels



were hired at Dueim if a man wished to travel into Kordofan, and a leisurely and Biblical journey was made across the sands and wild barren country until the wooded Nuba hills were reached. But the railway has put an end to that. A cinematograph was exhibited at El Obeid when the railway was declared open by Lord Kitchener, and the Kordofan chiefs who attended gaped at the miracle. The cinematograph and the railroad marked the beginning of a new era, one productive of peace and progress no doubt, but robbing gradually a hitherto unsophisticated set of barbarians of their simplicity. Civilisation may cut their claws and draw their teeth, but barbarians they will remain, in spite of cinematographs and railways, for the race tendency is strong. Civilisation will rid them of many qualities, but it may not replace them with any worth having.

Apropos of the railway, it has been told me since that some Kordofan chiefs who were sent by the Government down to Port Sudan to meet the King and Queen on their return voyage from India could not believe that so long a voyage could be performed in three days, and brought provisions for several weeks ! In the case of one

chief, the provisions included five wives, each bearing a pot of merissa.

As a matter of fact, Dueim, whose inhabitants are mostly agriculturists, has many disadvantages from the white man's point of view. It is very malarious during the autumn months, called *darat* by the natives, when the rains have swollen the Nile and flooded the khors. For down the stream float pieces of sudd, bearing the malignant anopheline mosquito, and the khors, or backwaters, lie stagnant and act as breeding-places for the pest. Later on, the health-giving north wind springs up—but those three months have exacted their toll of fever.

## CHAPTER XI

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

ON our arrival, we found Butler Bey, the Governor of the Province, on board. An Irishman, of a genial and enthusiastic temperament, he had spent many years in the Sudan, and, although his retirement was impending, he confessed that he hated the idea of leaving his work. The Nuba country in Central Kordofan seems to root itself in the hearts of the Englishmen who have had to administer justice and maintain peace there. For the natives they develop actual affection. "They're topping people," quoth Butler Bey, with his jolly smile. As for the raids by the Baggara Arabs on the Nuba gebels or hills, he said it was often a case of "Cherchez la femme." He used to threaten the Baggara girls with imprisonment if another raid occurred. "You naughty girls! Next time there is trouble, I'll



clap every one of you into gaol ! ” It was this way. There would be a dance, and the comely young Baggara girls would taunt the young bloods, saying, “ Ah, if our mothers and grandmothers had wanted slaves, our fathers and grandfathers would have procured them ; but you are afraid ! ”

Then the young men, piqued, would creep up into the hills, bag a few Nubas—or get bagged themselves—and return with the slaves to parade before the girls.

Slave-raiding is looked upon as a species of fox-hunting, and the Nubas are quite able to get their own back. One gebel runs sheer down in a precipice some two hundred feet from edge to foot ; and the Nubas used to catch a couple of Baggara Arabs when there was a feud between them owing to one of these little slaving raids, and prod them up the hill at the end of their spears, until they were forced over the precipice, to be dashed to pieces on the sharp rocks below.

The Nuba unmarried maidens have wrestling bouts among them. Professor and Mrs. Seligmann, who travelled in Kordofan to make ethnological notes, witnessed one of these contests—though

native men are not allowed to be spectators. They reported, however, that the tree-tops around swayed with Zacchæuses who had swarmed up to view the match. The winners of these wrestling bouts are much sought after in marriage. Men wrestlers go about from village to village, the champions being considered great men.

One day Butler Bey went down through Southern Kordofan to Dinkaland. He approached a village, in advance of his caravan, and sat down under a tree to wait for it and rest. He had entered into conversation with a Dinka who could talk Arabic, when suddenly his convoy of camels appeared. There was a general stampede. The Dinkas of this part had never seen a camel before, and were afraid that they would eat them. It was a long time before they could be persuaded to return and open proceedings, and then Butler Bey, thinking that at last he could get a siesta below the tree, laid him down. But it was not his lucky day for repose. A procession was seen approaching, composed of about twenty men and boys, who sang a chant. They marched around him in an ever-diminishing circle, until he was hemmed in. Then, one by one, they approached him, crawling, and

licked the palm of his hand. At the end of the procession of lickers, a bull was led, and this was solemnly presented to him. No sooner had they retired than, to his dismay, he saw a fresh twenty approaching from the village, and these went through the same evolutions and presented another bull. This was repeated, until he was the proud possessor of five bulls. During his progress through the district he had other bulls presented, and they became rather a nuisance. He refused the last five offered by polite villagers ; nevertheless, when he returned to the village two years afterwards, they brought him the bulls again, saying that they had kept them for him.

In connection with this habit of hand-licking, Butler Bey told us an amusing anecdote. When he went down the Sobat with Sir William Maxwell years ago on a pacification mission, the natives gathered on the bank at one point, making a great noise ; and a rainmaker, in full war-paint, was seen to be using incantations, as it was thought that the steamer with its gleaming guns and lights had the evil eye. One Sheikh and his retinue were at last persuaded to come on board. When they arrived on deck, they crawled on all fours to Sir



William Maxwell, took his hand, and spat into his palm. Far from being an insult, this was their form of showing good faith. The same unpleasant attention was shown to Butler Bey. By degrees they gained confidence, and the Sheikh was solemnly presented with an old opera-hat and a table-cloth of many colours ; and his delight was complete when Butler Bey hung around his neck a chain of beads, with a spoonbait divested of its hooks in the centre, as an ornament. He paddled back proudly with the hat on his head, the tablecloth draped around him, and the necklace around his neck. The envious ones on shore made for him in a body, the tablecloth was torn into hundreds of pieces, and numbers of delighted natives sported the fragments. The ice was broken. After such generosity, they got quite friendly.

. . . . .

We woke up the next morning to find ourselves in wooded country, and by wooded I do not mean green. The whole riverscape here was khaki-coloured ; the trees were miserable and burnt, the very water rushes, which should have been green, were yellowed with sun. The grass beneath the thorny undergrowth was pallid and

rank ; the tyranny of the sun was over the place like an iron hand. The only verdant patches upon which the eye could rest were the patches of papyrus that grows here and there, its plummy head bending before the north wind. And presently we saw a small island some four yards across, floating down stream. It was composed of grasses and reeds—it was an adventurous piece of sudd that had floated down from the Great Bog for which we were bound. It was easy to imagine how a river could be blocked by similar floating islands. Other things reminded us we were leaving civilisation behind us. Some one on the boat saw some monkeys springing from branch to branch on the nearest shore. At nine forty-five we arrived at our wooding station Dibeikir, one hundred and sixty miles from Khartoum.

A village of tukls stood on the shore, a little way from the neat stacks of wood piled up by the landing stage. This landing stage consisted merely of ragged stakes driven into the bed of the river and a footway of branches and rushes into which the foot sank as one walked upon it. The barefoot carriers passed along, bearing wood on their shoulders, which they deposited in the nugger.

They worked leisurely, however, bringing only a log at a time. Truly the suddite would be a boon if only in consideration for the time wasted in wooding. However, the scheme has not been proved workable yet, and it is possible that petroleum fuel may yet oust all other.

We went ashore ; the men to shoot. A village of tukls looks very much like a collection of hayricks, but a close inspection proved them to be clean, although cocks and hens ran in and out as they do in Irish cottages, and small kids, whose mammas were wandering about with the herds outside the village, were given the freedom of the little homesteads. A zariba or protection of thorns often formed a kind of yard about a tukl. The women, swathed in their dark blue tobes, came out to gaze and smile at us. One asked where we were going. When we replied " Fök baid ketir " (Yonder very far), she seemed satisfied. For every one understands " Fök " here to mean southwards. Mangy dogs, naked children, and semi-naked girls completed the population of the village. The men were out with the herds. At the end of the village stood the pigeon-cote, an odd structure of which I took a photograph.





GROUP AT OUR FIRST WOODING STATION.



Most of the villages of the Upper Sudan possess pigeon-houses, I was told. Outside the village a sunbaked track led into the surrounding bush. The grey soil of the trodden path was cracked into wide fissures from the heat. Dry, unkempt grass, thorny brake, cassia trees red of stem and protected with spikes, their powdery balls still honey-sweet if one plucked and smelt them, and other trees blighted and sparse—in fact, a barren mockery of a forest—stretched to right and left of this footway. It is as if Nature had exhausted the colours on her palette, and had painted this part of the world in browns and greys and ochres.

Half a mile out, we came upon high-shouldered, meek-looking oxen, tender-eyed as Leah, driven by a herdsman. He was black and unclothed to the loins, and wore a crownless sailor hat after the manner of a halo. After the sound of their scuttering hoofs had died away again, there was silence except for the sound of many wings when flocks of pigeons or wood-doves fluttered up in twenties and thirties, and away.

Then we returned to the village, over which vultures, strong-winged and patient, hovered, watchful



for offal. The guns returned too, with guinea-fowl, a franklin partridge, small quail, and a blue roller with long tail-feathers. They had seen monkeys and the spoor of a hippo.

We did not get under way again until one o'clock, wooding having occupied more than three unprofitable hours. During lunch we saw a large water python, about twelve feet long and a foot round, swimming powerfully in the water. Soon afterwards a small crocodile was sighted, sunning itself unsuspectingly on the bank. Some one at once rushed for a rifle, and a bang from the top deck was followed by the sudden jerk upwards of the reptile's tail. The shot had got him square in the middle. He flapped and flopped into the water, and that was the last we saw of him. A hippo, our first, was the next excitement, his pink and black snout showing like a half submerged buoy just above the river. He was too far away, happily, for a shot. There is, to me, something brutal in this indiscriminate potting at hippos. No one who has seen the good-tempered intelligence of hippos in captivity can help feeling a friendliness for this uncouth monster. He is a vegetarian, he does no harm to any one,

yet any tourist with a £5 licence, bad shot or otherwise, is entitled to shoot at him, without even dispatching him. It is usually replied that he destroys the agricultural efforts of the native. But in the sudd country and much of the Upper Nile there is no attempt at agriculture on the part of the native ; and native delight at getting hippo-meat is no invariably valid excuse either, for the poor hippo is often slaughtered and left to rot in the water. It is true that north of Kodok "sportsmen" are limited to four hippos, but after Kodok is passed there is absolutely no restriction as to number. It is the wounding to which I object. Surely the crocodile, though he be counted vermin, is entitled to the mercy of death, and how much more the amiable hippo !

We passed Abba Island later in the day. It is fringed by reeds and papyrus, and the trees are almost as green as if they stood by an English river. The Mahdi's house is still visible amongst the trees, for it was here, before his days of greatness, that he followed his trade of boat-builder, and let his imagination, fevered by asceticism, take the flights which ended in his proclamation of his Divine appointment. It is a green and

peaceful-looking spot in which to have evolved so bloody a mission !

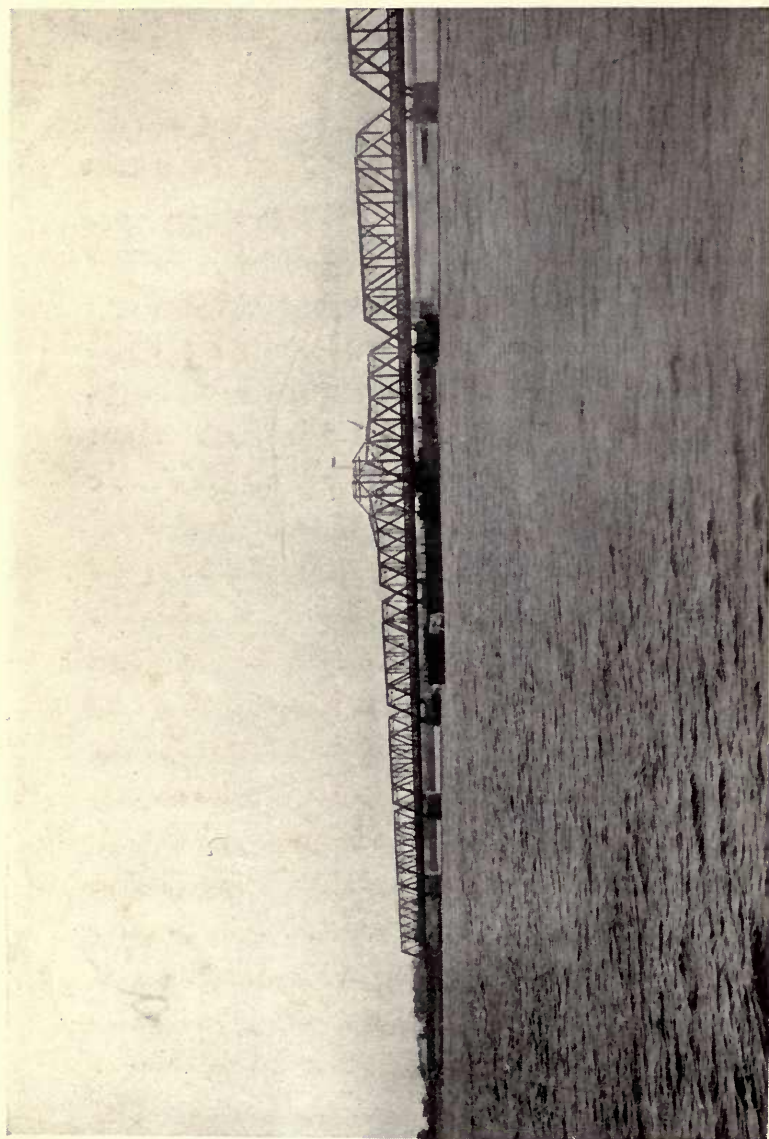
While the island was still in sight, we perceived three hippopotami like three black blobs on the water. But our approach sent them diving under the water, and they did not show themselves again. A black and white goose with a black knob on its beak was shot, and a small boat lowered to pick it up. It was subsequently cooked and served up, and proved palatable though coarse-flavoured : the guinea-fowl, too, were good eating, and better than the Sudan chicken.

The moon had risen before we arrived at Costi, a small station just above the new railway bridge. Some of our party were to join us there by train from Khartoum, so, without going ashore, we remained by the river bank till morning.

After the heat to which we had become accustomed, the next day proved to be chilly. The sky was grey, the thermometer registered 74 maximum and 60 minimum in the shade, and we shivered and wrapped ourselves warmly. The bridge at Costi was reached at 7.30, and we waited until it should be opened. The bridge—over which the railway to El Obeid passes—is a fine







THE RAILWAY BRIDGE AT COSTI.

structure, and resembles the bridge across the Blue Nile at Khartoum. It is supposed to open for river traffic between six a.m. and eleven a.m., but, in spite of our hooting, it remained churlishly closed until ten.

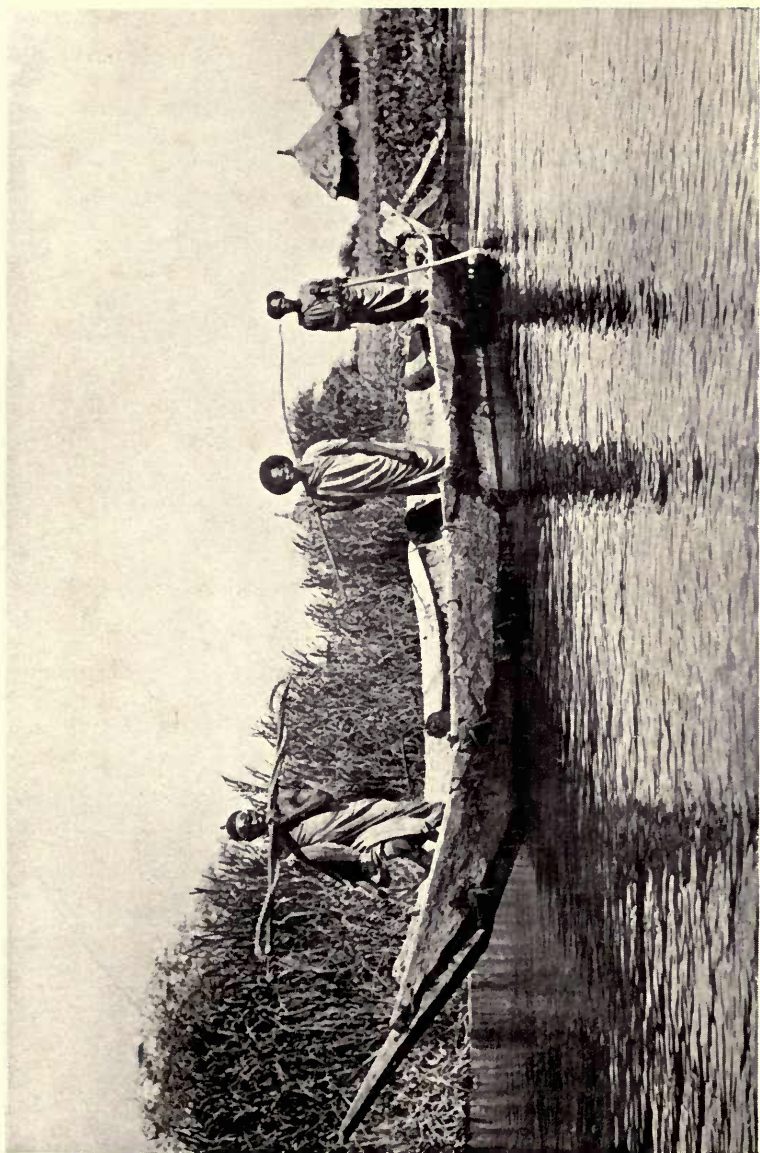
At Hillet Abbas we stopped to enable the Inspector who had joined us at Costi to get on shore, with the intention of riding back to Costi. A Shilluk village stood close to the landing stage, and I had an opportunity of seeing some of these people at close quarters for the first time. They were a fine-looking set of men, and their curious coiffure and ornaments gave them an imposing appearance. Farther south they are often entirely without clothing, but these men wore a toga-like garment of cotton, which was draped over one shoulder and left the upper part of the body bare. Several of them wore sandals. I endeavoured to buy a bracelet of solid ivory about two inches thick from one man, but as I thought the price he asked—five reals—was excessive, I did not purchase it. (A “small” real equals two shillings, a “big” real is the equivalent of the American dollar.) Later, I learnt that it is no unusual thing to pay as much as £5 for a good, thick,



two-rimmed specimen, embellished by black incisions.

Shortly after leaving, we encountered more masses of sudd, composed chiefly of papyrus (dees) and the rank grass called by the natives umm soof (mother of wool). These sudd islands look feathery and beautiful when seen like this, argosies of green, floating downwards. The shores appeared to be well wooded. Heglig and sunt, acacias and cassias, grew thickly to the very water's edge.

We wooded at Abu Zeid. This is a pretty village of tukls surrounded by trees. The women asked for baksheesh when a camera was levelled at them, but anxious mothers called their little ones into safe shelter and looked angrily at the would-be photographers. Again I marvelled at the cleanliness of these villages. No offensive sights meet the eyes, no offensive odours the nose. It is almost incredible after the filth and noisomeness of Egyptian villages. We passed several hippos and crocodiles—they roused no excitement. It is strange how quickly a wonder becomes commonplace. But though one's sense of novelty may become blunted, the sense of beauty is always



SHILLUK HIPPO HUNTERS, HILLET-ABBAS.

[Morris.]





fresh, and this was gratified that evening by the vision of Jebelein (the Two Mountains), its twin peaks silhouetted in silver grey against a sky ivoryed by the full moon. The Japanese see Fuji so in inspired moments, and these rugged peaks in Africa looked no whit less lovely under the magic of the tropical night.

## CHAPTER XII

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

THE farther one gets to the magic South, the more marvellous and multiform is the bird and beast life of this wonderful river. In my records for February 13, I find that I spent most of the morning in a deck-chair with field-glasses to my eyes, watching the population of the bank—beginning with two hippos, a mother and child, which stood, pink-nosed and fearless, amongst the tall grasses at the water's edge, to gaze at us. By the time that a zealous sportsman had got his rifle, they had leisurely disappeared into the water, leaving nothing more than an air-bubble and a ripple behind them. Farther on five or more hippopotami were disporting themselves, their wet black heads just showing above the surface. Tiny reed-warblers rose from the banks in clouds like smoke, revolving and

turning simultaneously as if in answer to an unheard word of command. Diving eagles, perched on low branches above the river, descended with a plop like that of a falling stone into the stream after fish, and afterwards stood on the bank extending their wings as a dancer spreads her skirts, in order to dry them in the sun and wind. Reeves and ruffs, sunbirds, rollers, pigeons, bee-guides, fluttered in the trees ; and water birds—long-legged cranes, kingfishers, weaver-birds and a host of others, tenanted the rushes and shallows. Herodotus mentions the crocodile bird, which enters the crocodile's jaws as he suns himself on the bank and picks his teeth ; and I was assured that there is really a little parasite bird tolerated by the crocodile in the same way in which the rhinoceros tolerates the rhinoceros bird. The latter lives upon the vermin which infest the hide, and has long curved claws specially adapted for clinging on. He repays the hospitality of his host by warning him by his cries of approaching danger. I do not think, however, that the crocodile bird is on such friendly and reciprocal terms with its patron.

During the morning, water-buck were sighted



on the port side, and the boat was brought to a standstill, in order that the men of the party might follow them up. We who were no Nimrods were carried to shore. It was desolate enough. The cotton soil was blackened, for the natives set fire to the old growth, in order to enable new grass to grow. A long plain of this blackened sundried soil stretched before us, enlivened only by some miserable shrub-like bushes and trees. Just by the river's edge the papyrus was green, and brilliant morning glories, pink and white, twined about a shrub which resembled a Cape gooseberry. Another bush proved to be the prized *arak*, from which our crew at once cut off sticks and shoots, for the wood of the arak is used to clean the teeth, the end being sucked and frayed until it becomes a brush. It is supposed to possess beneficial qualities, and is white and soft, the bark being light grey in colour. The Arabs and Sudanese are very particular about this detail of their toilet.

One man collected some of the giant white snail shells to be found by the water, and brought them to me as souvenirs. In the light ash left by the burnt grasses, I saw the delicate imprint

of a gazelle's foot, left, I suppose, that morning when the pretty creature had gone down to drink. The spoor of a hippo was not far off.

As we re-embarked, two young Arabs galloped up, holding enormous spears in their left hands, and drew their horses abruptly back on their haunches when they reached the bank. It was pure "showing-off," and these men, bronze-coloured and fine-featured, were slender and graceful as women, though every muscle was taut and trained. They conversed with our crew, and finally one bartered his spear for twenty piastres. Then, smiling and joyous, they rode off once more ; circled the plain like hawks and, reining in abruptly on the shore by our boats, stood up in their stirrups and shook their spears in farewell. In the clear atmosphere the two white-clad equestrian figures against the background of black had the effect of an antique Roman cameo.

Nor were they our only visitors. Before we left, some tall Shilluks, bearing spears, came up to inspect us. Their necks were adorned with necklaces, and their arms with countless metal bracelets fitting tightly to the arm. They appeared moved by no vulgar curiosity ; they merely

gazed with mild interest at the mad white folk who set so much store by the things which cannot matter. For the Shilluk, time is not, beyond the time of day or night according to the sun or stars ; he does not count years ; he does not know even his own age. He can seldom reckon more than a hundred. And travel, for the sake of travelling, can only seem to him a species of lunacy. So much seemed expressed by their incurious gazing.

As we steamed away, a little procession passed on the bank, bound, doubtless, for some neighbouring village. It included a woman and a child, seated, Europa-wise, on a bull, for the bull is a beast of burden here. A second bull was laden with the household effects, consisting of rolls of straw matting and cloth, slung up on either flank in panier fashion ; and arched over his back was a semicircular shelter of woven rush. The little band of travellers looked at us, and we at them. Did it represent a family flitting, or an impending marriage, or a commercial expedition ? We never knew, but left it plodding seriously on its way as we steamed out of the radius of vision.

Wooding took place at a village a few miles beyond Renk. Large *mrahs* or pens built of straw



and stakes told us that the place was rich in cattle. The tukls were surrounded by *hoshes*, or enclosures. Four little boys followed us on our tour of inspection, and eagerly collected the black film papers which one of our party threw away, and affixing them to the end of sticks like small black banners, acted as our escort. They were merry, pleasant little children, and were intensely interested when allowed to peep at the view-finder and see the pictures reflected in it. I asked the lightest in colour his tribe : it transpired that he was a Jaalin ; two others were Dinkas, and a fourth Nuba. A shy Dinka warrior, a youth of about six foot two, with an innocent babyish expression, was captured by one of our Arabs and brought up to be photographed. He spoke only a few words of Arabic, but the granting of his murmured request for *tumbak* sent him off, delighted, with an ounce or two of tobacco. My small friends were overjoyed by the present of some chocolate. Another boat was wooding beside us, and Captain O'Sullivan, Governor of the Upper Nile Province, proved to be on board. He came over to see us, and what he told us about Dinkas I have embodied in another chapter.

One of our party was dissatisfied with his shikari, and accordingly, when a young man in somewhat soiled white drapery detached himself from a group of idlers by the bank and presented a bundle of well-worn chits, they were read with interest. Former employers recommended him, and praised particularly his eyesight and keenness ; accordingly, he was engaged on the spot. He was a Habbaniya Arab from Southern Darfur, of something less than medium height, though lithe of build ; his dark features were pleasing, and before the end of our trip he showed himself to have plenty of personality. When told that he could come with us, he wrapped the chits once more in the piece of rag from which he had taken them, unwound his turban, tied them into a corner, and swathed it again round his head. He preferred a request that he might fetch his luggage from the village, and on receiving permission, returned just before the boat started, with—a spear !

It appeared later that some of the Dinka women in the village had not seen white women before. Some one asked their opinion of us. They replied that it was a pity we were so white. The thing

that interested them most was our figures, particularly that of one lady whose waist measurement was eighteen inches. "Where," inquired one of these black ladies—"where do they put their food?"

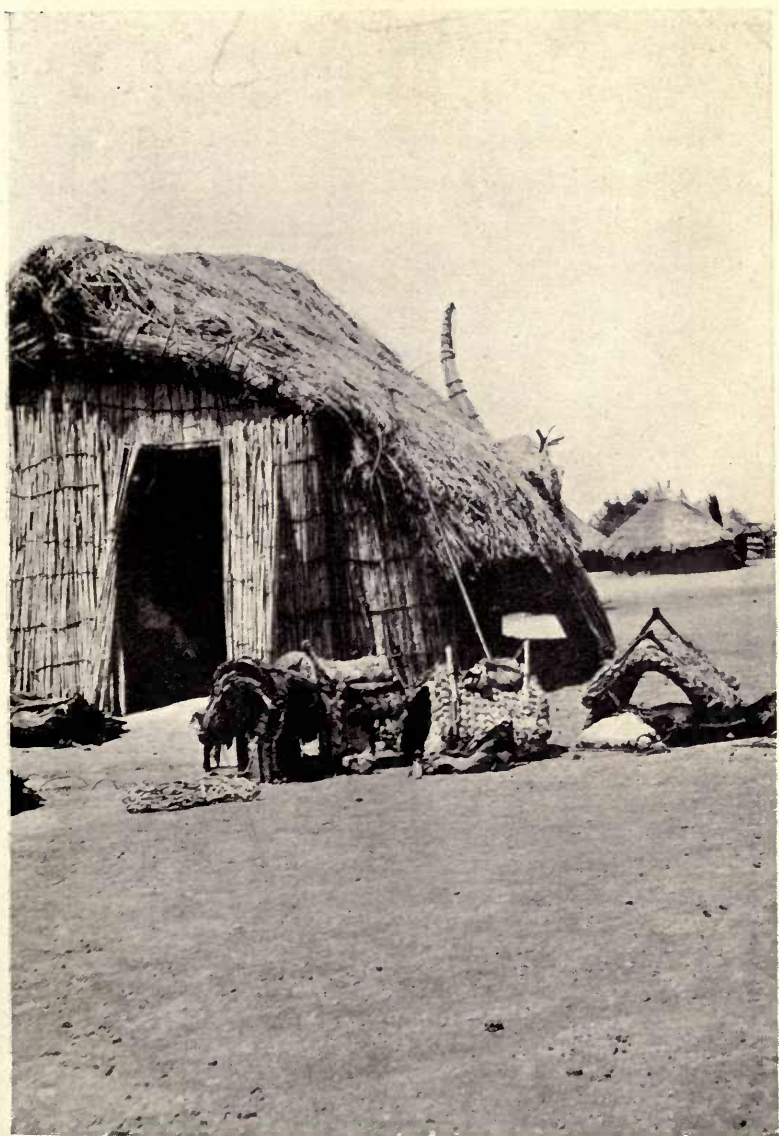
The next day—dedicated to St. Valentine—we hugged the shore, for the current was deepest near the bank. The trees were thick and tangled with creepers; the air was alive with glittering darting creatures. Their varieties were mostly unknown to me; but diving hawks and eagles and the long-legged water-birds were the most solemn amongst them. For the rest, red, blue and green warblers fluttered up and down like showers of living flowers; rollers passed on brilliant wings, and birds of iridescent plumage mirrored the light and broke it into rainbow colours on their glossy feathers. We passed herds of hippo, their snouts and occasionally their backs showing above the water. Once a great crocodile slipped slimily into the river. The nearer one gets to the damper heat of the South, the greener and richer does the river bank become. We had left behind the parched plains of the North.

At Melut, where we wooded, a number of Dinkas



were ranged upon the bank ; slender as rods, their tall slim bodies entirely naked and plastered with wood-ash—except the face—giving them the look of grey wraiths. The wood-ash serves to protect the body from mosquito bites. Their hair was matted and clipped into designs ; a tall plume was stuck into it. Ear-rings, bead and metal or ivory bracelets, and, occasionally, a small rag, were their only adornments ; and every man bore a spear. They seemed to live in a state of glorious idleness, to judge from the way in which they settled down to an hour's staring. It must not be thought that they are dead to the sense of modesty. A lady, resident in Khartoum, told me that on one of her trips down river, she took a fancy to a necklace worn by a Dinka, and offered to buy it. It was absolutely all that he had on, beyond his own skin ; but he modestly retired behind a tree to take it off.

The village, of tukls as usual, was remarkable for its curious dove-cotes. One tukl was pointed out as " the souk "—or bazaar ; and within sat the merchant, an Arab from Halfa. His wares were ranged inside, and consisted of blue and white beads, sugar, candles, and other simple com-



A VILLAGE SHOP.





modities. The village store of these wooding stations is often the property of the clerk in charge, who is usually an Egyptian or Arab, but not infrequently a Greek. In an out-of-the-way spot the Greek quickly sinks down to the level of the native ; or rather, much lower, since he loses the white man's virtues and does not gain the savage's good qualities. It is scarcely to be wondered at. Absolute solitude among savages, hardship, fever, and the damp horror of the rains ; these eat out the heart of the white man unless he be as easily adaptive as the Oriental Greek. I always remember with vivid horror the appearance of one Government clerk—his soiled tarbush proclaiming his official position. He was a miserable specimen, pock-marked, debased-looking, worn to a thread with fever. No other white man could have stood the job. He stood it—at the cost of the white man's pride.

I managed to get a photograph of two young girls grinding durra between two stones. They were so astonished at my appearance that they remained as if petrified over their task. The little living-tukls were spotlessly clean and smelt as sweet as a field of corn. The richest villager,

apparently, boasted no more than a few pots, an angareb and a blanket.

One of our Arabs, who spoke a few words of the Dinka language, suggested to the grey phantoms on shore that they should entertain us with a native dance or *diluka*. Their stony calm broke at last into wintry smiles, if the word could be used in a temperature of 86 degrees in the shade! They capered, shook their spears, lunged out and leapt in the air, then as suddenly collapsed into the same state of staring inaction. I bought a plumed spear from one brave for six shillings.

Just before we passed Melut, we saw grass fires on either side; sending up smoke and flame into the sky for some ten or twenty feet. The flames moved slowly, crackling and spitting, and leaving black desolation in their wake. Under that fiery sun which spared nothing save that which the river fed, there was something peculiarly ghastly in the line of flame.



THE DILUKA IN PROGRESS.





## CHAPTER XIII

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

F<sup>A</sup>SHODA, that forgotten bone of contention, is no more. You may search the map for it in vain, for, in a burst of *entente cordiale*, it was erased from the map. The riverside town where Kitchener met Major Marchand on a certain memorable occasion is now known as Kodok and is the capital of the Upper Nile Province. We steamed up to it in the grey heat of a February morning, the thermometer registering already 98 in the shade ; and, at the first glance, it did not look the kind of place about which rational people could quarrel. A wide, unoccupied area of bare soil, devoid of blade of grass or grace of herb, stretches between the town of tukls and the river. The whole unattractive place is as destitute of vegetation as a barrack square ; the tukls stand in long, dreary, regular rows, and everything visible,

except the sky, which is leaden with heat, is brown. London has nothing more drab. Brown earth, brown tukls, brown horizon, brown people—the latter nearer black if accuracy be observed. The natives here are mostly Shilluks, for the Mek or Melek (King) of the Shilluks lives at a short distance from the town in all his native state.

These Meks are a long-established dynasty, the present Mek being the twenty-sixth of his line. The succession never passes from father to son, for the Mek is chosen from two royal families alternately, which are related but not identical, and this arrangement does not, as one might expect, provoke great tribal disputes. When the Anglo-Egyptian Government took over the country after the defeat of the Dervishes, the then Mek was sent into captivity at Halfa, as the Shilluks showed a disposition to be troublesome. He was a simple-minded old man who had never travelled far, and Bishop Gwynne told me that when he saw him at Halfa one day, the old pagan conversed with him by means of an interpreter. Apparently, he had been interested in the assiduity with which his companions in adversity—Mahdists and Mohammedans—said their daily prayers. He said



that he thought that in future he would pray five times a day, as they did. The Bishop replied that prayer was an excellent thing, and that Christians usually prayed twice a day. Some time afterwards the Bishop paid another visit to the Mek, who said to him despondently, "I can please nobody about this praying. I shall be like you, and never pray at all."

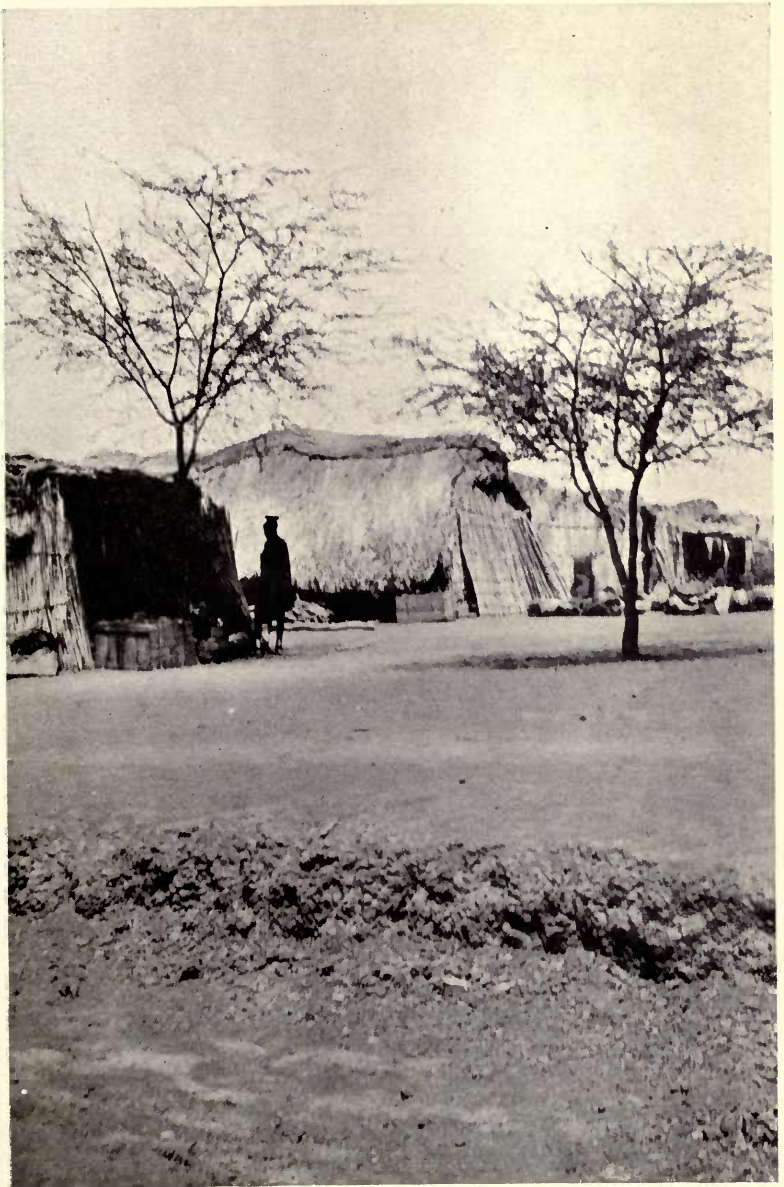
Should an aged Mek outlive his full power of body and mind, the "law of the pack," as Kipling says, ordains that his chief wife shall judicially put an end to his life. The present Mek is already old, and I do not suppose that, even should he attain a still greater age, a similar fate could overtake him under present conditions. The Shilluks have a tendency to regard him as an independent monarch who condescends to help the Government, but this idea is gradually dying out, as the old Mek leaves administration of tribal land more and more in the hands of the inspectors.

On the high bank, or dyke of the river, a number of Shilluks stood, at their usual magnificent occupation of contemplation; equipped with shields of crocodile skin, long spears, knives, and scanty clothing. A rag or a string of beads is

considered an elegant, even a superfluous, costume by a Shilluk. But they are fond of bracelets, and often two-thirds of their arms are covered by countless bands of metal, beads or ivory, in some cases, where the arm has outgrown them, so small that they are sunken into the flesh. These gaunt giants gathered around us at a respectful but curious distance ; and, through the medium of Abdu, I bought some curious pipes from one of them, measuring about eighteen inches in length, made of terracotta and bamboo, and extremely heavy ; also a knobkerry or club, weighing as much as an athlete's dumb-bell, and hewn from a single piece of wood. Such a weapon would easily brain a man at one blow.

There were shops among the tukls, but the merchants only sold cloth, grain, and the commodities of necessity, which, however, included tinned fruits and vegetables and beads. Some black, smiling women—the women have always more to say than the men—questioned us as to our destination, to which we replied, as usual, “ Fok ! ” (Yonder !) which ambiguous reply satisfied their curiosity.

Kodok is a big place as these tukl-towns go ;



VIEW IN KODOK (FASHODA).



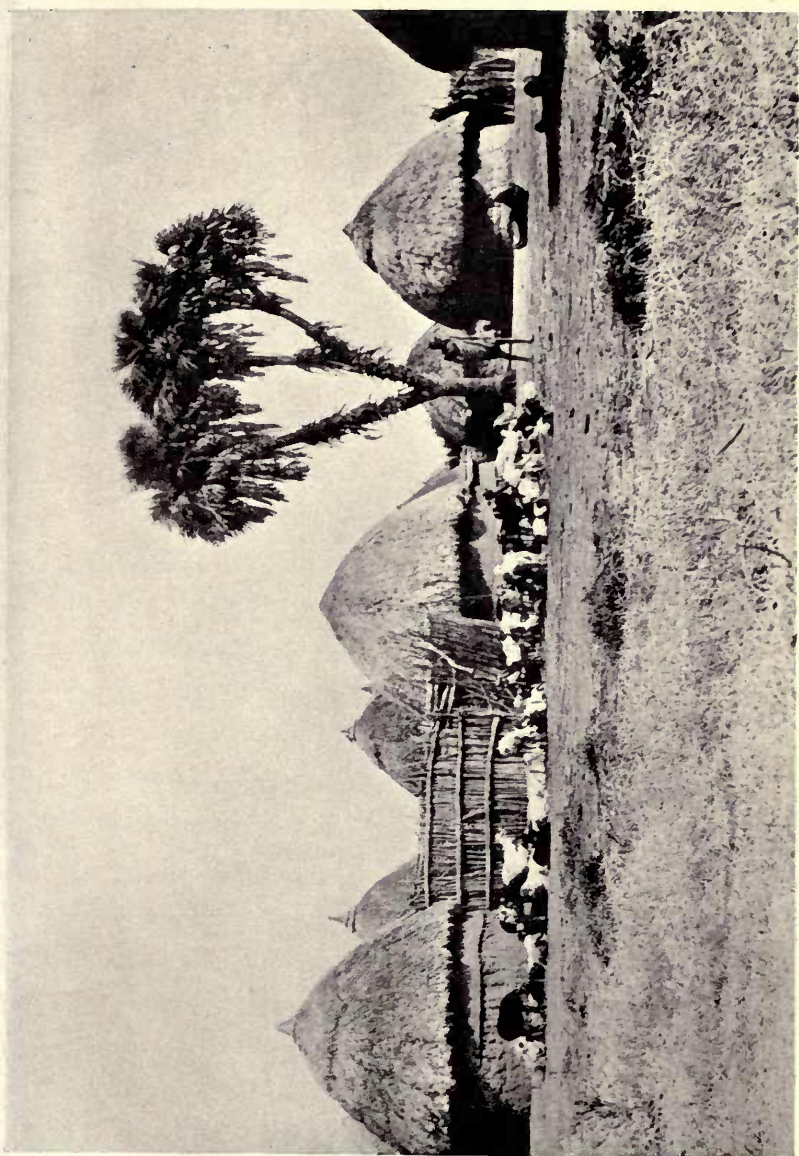


but, with a baking sun pouring down its vertical rays upon our heads, we did not feel inclined to explore it for long, and so returned to the ship, passing a little caravan of bulls laden with merchandise. It is strange to see these animals taking the place of the camels of the North, but their mild patient countenances give the lie to the fierceness with which bulls are accredited. The baggage bull has the amiability of the mildest Alderney cow; a little child could guide him, and often does. It is literally true in this corner of the world that the ox lies down with the ass.

Two hours brought us to Lul; and here we stopped to enable an Italian passenger to borrow a rifle from the fathers, for it is at this place that the Austrian fathers have established their mission settlement for the benefit of the Shilluks, whom they instruct in various handicrafts of civilisation. I was told that one father, who is a learned man, has acquired more of the Shilluk tongue than any white man living, and has made a collection of Shilluk stories and songs. Apparently he does not join unqualifiedly in the universal praise of the Shilluks, for one hears from some people that they live in an idyllic state of simplicity and innocence

and that their morals are as fine as their dress is elementary. On the contrary, he asserts that many of the folk-songs show a lack of moral sense, and that he does not permit the younger fathers to read translations of them. He finds many admirable qualities in the Shilluk, but deprecates their unconquerable hatred of work. The occupations of the Shilluk are the occupations of a gentleman of leisure—hunting and fishing. They leave the cultivation of their durra mainly to their women-folk, also the grinding and baking of the same. The fathers at Lul have gradually persuaded some of the men to work for them, and I noticed that the Shilluks who stood by the mission landing-stage were more clothed than usual, possibly owing to the representations and influence of the fathers. It is a malaria-ridden place, though the mission garden is green and well-attended; and the Superior was, at the time of our calling, in bed with an attack of fever. The father who brought a rifle on board was a delicate-looking man, whose health, to judge by his appearance, was none of the best. He was very agreeable and charming, and courteously lent a .577 bore by Holland, and five rounds of ammunition more or less damaged.





[Morhig]

SHILLUK VILLAGE.



The remainder of the day was uneventful. We saw a good many crocodiles, also a wild ostrich ; and were visited by one or two serut flies and a few mosquitoes. The poisonousness of the serut fly is somewhat exaggerated. If one be in a good state of health, the bite of a serut fly does no more harm than the sting of a gnat. But it is very voracious and attacks you with great pertinacity. Though it is as large as a wasp, it alights with such feather lightness that it is almost impossible to feel it. The first warning of its presence is a pin-like thrust into your epidermis. As for the mosquitoes, they had hardly made themselves noticeable as yet ; it was possible to sit out in evening dress without covering either neck or arms, and our mosquito boots were not brought into requisition until we were in the midst of the sudd region.

The evening being therefore both lovely and mosquito-less, we sat talking far into the night. I remember that an Anglo-Egyptian official on board, when asked what was the "tightest corner he had ever been in since he came to the Sudan," told us of an incident which I transcribe here. It happened in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. A certain native



Sultan, secure as he thought in being fifty-five miles away, had sent insulting messages and letters when told by the Government to come in. It was decided to give him a lesson, and to bring him in. So Captain A—— started with all the forces at his command, which consisted of only twenty-eight men, recruited for the most part in the Sultan's own district. He chose a devious route, and arriving at the village which was the Sultan's head-quarters at night, set his twenty-eight men around it, and sent a deputation in to say that he had come to talk to the inhabitants. But they took fright, blew the alarm, and opened fire on the party of ambassadors, who forthwith returned without delivering their message. There was nothing to do but to fight. The Sultan escaped by a subterranean passage early in the combat, but the assaulting party were victorious, losing only one man, whilst many of the villagers were killed. The Government troops entered the village and searched it; then, remembering that they had left only five men at the Government station and thinking that the Sultan's next move would probably be to attack it, they hurried back without waiting to rest, reaching the station at eleven



*S. Dunn, Esq.*

DONKEY TRANSPORT CROSSING THE NA'AM RIVER NEAR MVOLO (BAHR-EL-GHAZAL).

(Showing the enormous height of the grass on the river banks.)





o'clock the next morning. So, altogether, they had marched more than one hundred and ten miles and had an engagement, all within fifty-nine hours !

In listening to these and other tales of the adventure of distant administrators, I was forcibly reminded of what Mr. Putnam Weale wrote of a great Englishman in China, the late Sir Robert Hart : " It would seem as if the Fates had made in the Englishman a man who, though often narrow-minded and insular in his own country, has it in his power to identify himself completely with the interests of foreign countries beyond many seas, and to carry tasks of the most dissimilar nature to a successful conclusion." The Inspector in these outlying provinces has to be a Jack-of-all-trades.

Civil and military powers are welded in him ; he must be almost entirely dependent upon his own judgment. His authority rests, as in the case I have just related, upon his own personality and his powers of " bluffing." There is no person on earth so easily intimidated by " bluff " as the native. To illustrate this, the following story is apropos. A certain English official found himself

shut in on a gebel in the Nuba country in Kordofan, surrounded by four hundred hostile tribesmen, who had avowed their intention of killing him. "How did you escape?" I asked, when he told me the tale. "Oh, by talking!" he replied. "I asked them what earthly good they would do themselves by killing me. Was it because they disliked me as an individual? If that were the case, let them kill me quickly, always remembering that there would be a heavy price to pay to the Government. If it were because I was a Government official, I must remind them that if I were killed, another official would be sent in my place, possibly two, and that for each life taken, many would be demanded. If they imagined that they could rid themselves of the Government by killing its emissaries, they were mightily mistaken. Besides putting the matter to them thus, I appealed to their sense of hospitality and right. 'You are brave men,' I said; 'do you think it courageous to kill one by four hundred? If you will, appoint one man and we will fight it out, he and I. I am a stranger and at your mercy; you are in your country and in great numbers. It is obvious, therefore, that you can do what you like.'" To

his surprise, the tribesmen let him go, and finally established the most friendly relations. It is often observed, with some justice, by captious critics in Egypt, that the "what-a-good-boy-am-I!" attitude of the high official in the Sudan Government Service is both irritating and hardly justified by actual fact. In Khartoum a perpetual back-patting goes on. Mr. or Major So-and-So is complimented on his energy and devotion; such-and-such a department is extolled; and, if one were to judge by this attitude of self-congratulation, one would conclude that we—the English—were philanthropists actuated only by the noble desire to improve the lot of the unsophisticated Sudanese.

Now it is obviously ridiculous to talk as if we governed the Sudan for the good of its inhabitants only. The Sudan is not a philanthropic institution administered by paternal young men who are paragons and saints and Ouida heroes all in a breath. Neither is it a country in which the brutal Englishman exploits and kicks the cowed native, as some others would have us believe. It is, frankly, an investment, and we, as business people, are waiting patiently for our percentage, and not



forcing the country in any way, as the Belgians have done the Congo. It is not a Utopia. The officials are adequately paid, and work for their pay. But the majority of Englishmen in the Sudan are public school and University men, men of both Services, and men of ability. They realise keenly that national prestige lies in the hands of every individual who works in the Sudan, and, as in honour bound, most of them do their best to keep it up. And the lion's share of commendation must go to the men who work in the outlying districts and have to depend, as in the two cases I have just narrated, upon their own seven senses, including common-sense and tact.

. . . . .

Taufikia was reached at about half-past two the next morning. When I turned out of my cabin a pink dawn was showing behind the dom palms, while a warm, dust-laden wind whistled through them, telling of parched wilderness beyond. Taufikia is not a cheerful place. Some Sudanese troops in khaki which matched the ground were being drilled joylessly by an English officer in preparation for the Sirdar's visit, due in a day or two. The

hot wind was enough to blow any one into a bad temper.

We wooded at Khor Atar, having passed the mouth of the Sobat. A number of gaunt, wood-ash-besmeared phantoms sat in phalanxes on the shore, their thin knees up to their chins, their inevitable spears in their hands. The village was a replica of many others, but I noticed in particular a straw-roofed mosque for the use of the Mohammedan contingent from Khartoum. It is this contingent who do the labour—or rather the dilatory form of leisure which consists in passing logs along from the shore to the boat; for the Shilluks and Dinkas scorn to labour, and merely form decorative spectators. So men are sent from Omdurman to each wooding station with their women-folk for this purpose.

Serut flies began to be numerous, as the banks were thickly wooded, and the bitterns, pelicans, and other hosts of water-birds scarcely troubled to fly as we passed them, so accustomed were they to be undisturbed. Crocodiles abound in the river at this point, and several were shot at, some being wounded, whether mortally or not I cannot say. A green nenuphar floating down-stream was

pointed out to me. It looks like a little green cabbage and contains, I was told, hundreds of ants, who colonise on these water-plants. This nenu-phar, small as it is, is often the cause of obstruction, as it has long roots, which cling on in a shallow part of the river, forming an embryo island, which is quickly reinforced by small pieces of drifting sudd until a formidable obstacle is the result. A curious little wood beetle found on deck was also brought to me for inspection. This little insect has a square body and a big round head, with which he bores into wood, eating his way through with such a good appetite that he emerges quite four times the size that he went in.



## CHAPTER XIV

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

WE awoke the next morning to find ourselves in the Bahr-el-Zeraf, or River of the Giraffe, off the regular steamboat route at last, and brought up against the bank while the men went off to shoot. It is not a country in which Nature is in a glad or generous mood. Every growing thing is stunted, all vegetation is burnt and coarsened by the pitiless sun. Fires had done their devastating work as well, and the tall grass was charred and blackened, and the trees scorched where the quick bush fires had rushed past them. Here and there a green shoot showed that life was slowly reawakening, and the downy fluff balls of the cassia hung on the low bushes. But the new leaves had been eaten by red-winged locusts, which whirled up heavily in their legions from the skeletons of bushes and trees as our footsteps disturbed

them, with a sound like falling waters. The trunks of the sunt trees, ruddy as if with blood-stains, looked oddly fantastic in this desolation of drab and black; and the ground was cracked and parched as if this were the shore of a river in Hades.

The three guns returned with the heads and antlers of one water-buck, one tiang and two white-eared cob—beautiful woodland creatures, whose nobility deserved a better fate. It gave one a pang to think of their widowed and soft-eyed does, for the great herds were so unafraid. They lifted their heads with mild surprise, and were slow to take alarm. If they had been shy, we should have had little chance of stalking them, for the noise of our steamer would have sent them fleetly into the long grass and thick under-wood.

But though big game shooting may appear cruel, especially in the case of gazelle and small antelope, one cannot very well quarrel with the *bona-fide* sportsman who shoots for sport, takes his risks, and abides by the rules governing that sport, unless from the humanitarian standpoint, namely, that lack of meat should be the only valid excuse for

killing any animal. Museum collections are enriched by carefully selected trophies, and the cause of science is served by the rifle.

Unfortunately, the rules are not always kept. Every year reports come to hand of such and such a tourist who has been firing indiscriminately from the deck of the steamer into a herd of buffalo or elephant on the chance of shooting some dead, without troubling to follow up the wounded animals. Try as he will, Mr. Butler, the superintendent of the game shooting, cannot stop these offences against the sporting instinct. In the majority of cases these big game hooligans are rich and influential people, and fines do not worry them. They pay up, and boast of "le sport" for the rest of their lives. One of the worst offenders of recent years was a certain titled person who returned to Khartoum with a bag of three elephants (only two being allowed on the licence), of which one was a male with 10-lb. tusks, one a cow, and the third a calf. To my own knowledge another man was let loose with a gun, a licence, and the best intentions, and told some one that he thought he had hit something, as he had seen blood about, but did not know whether his rifle was



sighted for a hundred or a thousand yards ! On being asked why he had not followed up the wounded antelope, he replied that he objected to the lions !

Had our larder been in want, the guinea-fowl which rose in flocks from the scrub as we churned the oily water with our stern wheel would have provided us with plenty.

We had seen country over which fire was passing in the distance ; we now went through some reaches of the river about which flames leapt on either side at close quarters, crackling, hissing, devouring, and sending up thick smoke into the sky. The heat was fervid, the very wind was scorching, and bore sparks towards us. One realised what the Indian fakir suffers who lights fires in a circle around him and sits in the blazing sun. The only living thing we saw in this zone of fires, save the crocodiles which lay like logs half in and half out of the water, was a brightly-coloured bird, which Captain A—— called a firebird. It is so named because of its habit of following up these forest fires and feasting on the roasted grubs and other tit-bits in the black ruin. Here and there we came to a reach which the fires had spared, and all the

way tall masses of umm suf and papyrus lined the banks, for every mile now brought us nearer the great swamp. At night the fires flickered all round the low horizon, the smell of burnt grass and wood was in our nostrils, and the taste of it on our lips. It was a scene which might have given Dante local colour for his "Inferno."

The next day I awoke at sunrise and landed with Captain A—— and his shikari on the left bank, the other men and their shikaris choosing the right. Where we landed, the bushes were thick with weaver birds' nests, wonderful pieces of bird architecture, consisting of rushes and grasses interwoven together with such skill as to form a beautifully modelled ball, the opening being a small round hole just big enough to allow the little occupants to pass in and out. The tall grass had been burnt in patches, and our clothes, hands and faces, soon looked as though we had rubbed against a sheaf of charcoal pencils. Where the grass was not burnt it was often above our heads, coarsened and bleached by the sun, and here and there beaten down where some great beast had ploughed through it. The only way in which one could obtain a view of the country was

by climbing on to a tall ant-hill—these achieve heights of four and five feet on an average—thus rising above the grass. Then we found ourselves again in thick underwood, scarlet with the stems of the mimosa trees and tangled with thorns. The method of going was to creep forward with bent knees, so as to keep below the level of the grass ; but, though we sighted a buck in the distance, we did not arrive within shooting range. He got wind of us and disappeared. Occasionally we came on deep pit-like marks, showing that an elephant had passed this way when the ground was soft from the last rains, and here and there were spoor of hippopotami and giraffe. We returned at ten o'clock, to find that the others had already re-embarked, with the head of one fine water-buck. Moreover, they told us that they had actually sighted giraffe.

The shikaris took the keenest interest in looking out for game, and their sharp eyes could detect a herd or single animal at a distance at which we were only able to distinguish objects with the aid of strong field-glasses. The little Habbania Arab was always alert, and it was his vanity to be first with the excited cry of “ Tétel ! ” or Tîl ! ” or



whatever he had sighted. He jumped about impatiently till the guns started, and his face was one beam when they returned successful. Here is a list of the local names of bird and beast which may be useful to some sportsman travelling up-Nile:

Elephant . . .	<i>Fil</i>
Hippopotamus . . .	<i>Grinti, grintia</i>
Crocodile . . .	<i>Timsah</i>
Lion . . .	<i>Asad</i> or <i>Dùd</i>
Lioness . . .	<i>Labwa</i>
Leopard . . .	<i>Nimr</i>
Monkey . . .	<i>Niss-Nass</i>
Baboon . . .	<i>Girid</i> or <i>ti gl</i> (the "r" must be rolled)
Buffalo . . .	<i>Gamùs</i>
Pig . . .	<i>Haluf, khanzir</i>
Wart-hog. . .	<i>Haluf</i>
Hyena . . .	<i>Marjain, Dabá</i>
Eland . . .	<i>Bouggá</i>
Water-buck . . .	<i>Katambùr</i>
White-eared Cob . . .	<i>Hamraia</i> or <i>Tìl</i>
Tiang . . .	<i>Tètèl</i>
Kudu . . .	<i>Nyellut</i>
Mrs. Gray . . .	<i>Abu-akk</i>
Rhinoceros . . .	<i>Khartit</i> or <i>Abu girin</i>
Ostrich . . .	<i>Na-aam</i>
Giraffe . . .	<i>Zeraf</i>
Hartebeest . . .	<i>Tètèl</i>
Roan antelope . . .	<i>Abu Urrf</i>
Gazelle . . .	<i>Ghazal</i>
Duck . . .	<i>Batt.</i> or <i>Wiz</i>

Goose . . . .	Wiz (plural <i>Wizin</i> )
Whistling Teal . .	<i>Batt</i>
Baleoniceps Rex or	
Shoebill Stork .	<i>Abu Markub</i>

Everything male is *dakr*, and female, *'ntaia* or *anas*.

A new type of incident was provided by the court martial on a small boy, who was found to be in possession of a watch-bracelet belonging to some one on board. The theft was discovered while the culprit was bathing, for the bracelet fell out of his belt. He gave the not very plausible explanation that he had bought it in Omdurman, but the theft was brought home to him. It was ordained that he should be whacked at the next wooding station, but I do not know if the sentence was ever carried out, though the small black culprit was forced to part with the bracelet and lived in fear for several days. The magpie instinct is always strong in these black urchins, and it is as well not to put temptation in their way.

Later on in the day, there was a great fall in the temperature. The sudd was gradually closing in around us; though the river itself was wide, the channel was narrow, and between us and firm

ground was a swampy area of reeds. Telegraph wires showed that civilisation, even in this distant spot, was within reach, though the poles lurched tipsily forward in places where giraffes or elephants had scratched themselves against them, or heavy diving eagles had used them for a perch. Whistling teal passed over the boats in long lines, and we sighted again and again large herds of hartebeest, tiang and water-buck. The evening, though we were on the outskirts of the Great Bog, brought us no mosquitoes to speak of, though the buzz and hum of insect life was continuous, and fireflies sped through the air at dusk and sometimes alighted on deck.

Nor did the next day bring a return of the great heat—our maximum record in the shade was 86, which by comparison seemed almost cold. Early in the morning a boat was put off, and one of our party returned after an hour or two, with the heads of two water-buck and one tiang. The horns of the buck measured 28 inches and  $29\frac{1}{2}$  inches respectively, and the tiang  $20\frac{1}{2}$  from tip to tip. Our crew continued to give trouble. This time it was the smiling Sudani cook-lady, who had taken it into her many-plaited, well-greased head to fall



in love with a stoker on our steamer. The men on the nugger for which she cooked refused to allow her to invite her lover on to their boat, no doubt agreeing that the culinary art demands undivided attention. So she had refused to cook for them, and sat nursing an uncooked fish on her bare black knees, sobbing and wiping her eyes with a rag. The men appealed to authority, and she was told sternly that punishment should be her portion if she continued to mutiny, and that if she would not cook, neither should she eat. A morning's sulking and starvation brought her to her senses, and by the afternoon she was showing her beautiful rows of white teeth as before, and, to judge by her manner, bore no one any malice.

We were in the heart of the sudd country at last. For miles at a time nothing broke the sea of undulating grasses but an occasional dom palm rising above the swamp, or grey ant-hills so smooth and hard that they often deceived us into thinking that they were the backs of elephant or rhinoceros. The sky was obscured by a malignant mist, the atmosphere damp, heavy and miasmatic. We passed one curious village on an arm of dry land. Its naked inhabitants stood on a big, cone-shaped





WEAVER NESTS IN AMBATCHE TREES, BAHR-EL-ZERAF.



ant-hill to view us as we approached, their spears bristling upwards, and when we were within hail, they called out in welcome and informed us that there was plenty of game. They were probably in need of meat and hoped that we were a shooting party. But we steamed on, the wash from our progress rocking their dug-out canoes (made of hollowed tree trunks), and ambatches or craft constructed of faggots of ambatch. The ambatch tree grows in the water, and is very much thicker at the root than higher up, its stem tapering away abruptly as the lower branches are reached. It seldom reaches a height of more than three or four feet, but is prized for its light, tough wood. It flowers in February, and its blossom is bright yellow and fragrant, resembling a laburnum flower in shape, but growing singly on the hairy thorn-protected stem instead of in a down-drooping cluster. The leaf is pinnate.

But neither beast nor man had real dominion here, for as I have said, this is the kingdom of the birds. Where there were trees they were white with snowy-plumaged herons and alive with flapping bodies. Water-fowl of all kinds were busy at their fishing, other bright-feathered birds

brushed the surface of the river in their pursuit of insects, the air was flagellated by hundreds of wings at a time. The calls and screams of the birds were of every note. They seemed to know no fear of us. One small bird with a pink breast and scarlet bill actually flew on board, and after hopping about and investigating things with his bright eyes, he decided to stay. We scattered a few crumbs for him, and the next day he grew so bold that he ventured on to our laps and into our hands. Then, suddenly and fearlessly, he decided he would be a passenger no longer, and, perching an instant on the rail, flew back to the swamp. Once we saw the rare *baleoniceps rex*, or shoe-bill stork, a big bird with a swollen bill of ridiculous dimensions, standing gravely on an ant-hill above the reeds, looking like a parody of himself.

And once we passed a dead crocodile lying belly upwards, an ugly sight, his huge body swollen, green and loathsome through decomposition. As night drew on, the miasmic mist thickened, there was the smell of rank and decaying water-plants, the fireflies began their nightly flickering in and out of the forest of reeds, and frogs their evil chanting. Night-jars flitted across the river after flies, and







THE DREDGER AT WORK.

the great marsh was full of mysterious sounds, an under-tone made up of a million tiny notes of infinitesimal grades, the voice of the silence, the song of the whispering swamp.

A sharp bend in the river brought us sudden surprise. A few miles away over the darkened waste, and visible plainly in the vast monotony, was a lighted monster. It was a dredger, and by degrees we got up to the ungainly craft where she lay ready to begin work betimes the next morning, for these dredgers have a hard fight for it with the octopus. In the loneliness of this savage place there was something marvellously friendly in the sight of the lights and the sound of human speech. Her men came eagerly to the side, and an English voice—that of the engineer in charge—shouted out a greeting as we passed and the information that there were sandbanks ahead. That was all, and then the monster's lights flickered into a mere spark as we steamed slowly on our way. The man who had called out to us, Captain A—— told me, had once saved a native from a crocodile at the imminent risk of his own life. The natives respect him deeply, and his nickname amongst them is “Abu el Melek”

(Father of the King). They soon know how to measure the character of a man ; in these places of desolation little of a man's nature remains hid, for elemental things lie so close to the surface that the emergencies of daily life bring one into direct touch with them.

That evening, owing to our late difficulties with the crew, the conversation fell on the uses and abuses of the "cat," or *kurbag* as it is called in Arabic. The opinion of the man with longest experience of the Sudan was that the natives usually prefer this punishment to having their pay docked or undergoing imprisonment. They regard a man who cries out under a flogging as a great coward, and are so proud of their powers of endurance that at Sudanese weddings two men will voluntarily flog each other till one gives in, the victor being given the title of *akho benat* (brother of the girls, or brave man). It is not an uncommon thing to see a Sudani's back badly scarred from such self-imposed beatings. Sudanese of all tribes make a boast of being able to bear pain without flinching. A Sudanese Arab brought into hospital with a diseased leg was told that he must have it cut off. "Hader" (I am ready), he replied.



"But," said the doctor, "you will not feel the pain, because we will give you a medicine to send you to sleep, and when you wake the leg will be gone." The patient indignantly refused to take any anæsthetic, and endured the operation without a moan or a shrinking.

## CHAPTER XV

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

CRASH! Bang! Crash! We all hastily slipped on dressing-gowns and ran out into the dawn to see what had happened. It was nothing serious—in the narrow channel the living-nugger had ground against the steamboat, and, being rotten, part of her side was splintered away. It was repaired by lashing on logs, and the sun got up in his strength over the wilderness of sudd. It was all as flat as a billiard table, and of a bronzy green, miles and miles of whispering reeds bending before each wind like waves of the sea, uninhabited except for the birds and the insects and the slow horrible beasts that live in the slime. The hippopotamus is the friendliest, and of his kind we saw a big herd, which disappeared like magic as soon as we had shot into their midst.

While repairs were in progress we lay to by a

number of ambatch trees growing in the water which were full of weavers' nests. I was enabled to get a good photograph of these, which was afterwards sent to the Budapest Museum. Skinners were busy upon the roof of the injured nugger, and the odours borne from it were not altogether fragrant, for the meat of the animals being the perquisite of the shikaris, strips of water-buck and tiang had been hung all round the iron netting and on every available space, while in the centre the professional taxidermist cured the skins and skulls with alum, pepper and salt. One would expect decomposition to set in quickly in such heat, but, strangely enough, the meat has no time to go bad ; it is sun-dried in a few hours, and when it has hardened to the consistency of leather, can be put away in a dry place and kept for months. The shikaris doubtless were enabled to earn a comfortable sum of money by disposing of the meat when they returned to Omdurman at the end of the trip, as dried meat commands a good price.

At lunch time we came upon the second dredger, and as it was daylight we could examine her. She was visible a long way off over the flat expanse of



green, and when the winding river had brought us up to her we stopped alongside. She had the usual complement of engineers—three Englishmen—and a crew of fifty natives; and the upper deck was enclosed entirely in mosquito wiring, giving it the appearance of a giant meat-safe. She was working, and was of the type known as the “grab dredger,” that is to say, she carried a huge crane in front, which dropped a carriage, with opening teeth like an enormous mouth, into the sudd. The teeth descended, closed, and when the carriage was lifted aloft once more with its dripping burden, the crane began to swing round, and the mass was deposited on the widening bank of swamp, while muddy water eddied into the space which it had lately occupied. The “grab” lifts about a ton and a half at a time.

The engineers came to the side to give us a welcome, attired in faultless white duck. Was there ever such a nation as the English! Men of Latin or German nationalities, living in the solitude of the swamp for months at a time, sweltering in damp heat, and rarely seeing a white face, would have succumbed to carelessness of dress, if not to actual dirt and slovenliness. Yet here were these



A VIEW OF THE CELEBRATED "CUT" BETWEEN THE BAHR-EL-ZERAF  
AND THE BAHR-EL-GEHEL.





three exiles, taken unawares, discovered in clean collars ! I commented on the fact to an Englishman, who made the reply, " If they began to let those things slide, it would mean letting all self-respect slip. When a man is left alone the pyjama habit is very easy to acquire and very difficult to get rid of." So much psychology enters into the toilet, that I think he was perfectly right.

They permitted us to buy some coal from them, two coal barges lying at anchor beside them in the river ; and when we had taken in about a ton, we bade them farewell and paddled our winding way through the interminable sea of weeds, more monotonous than any canal country in Holland, more desolate than any veldt, too hot to possess the beauties of blue sky and white clouds, too damp to invigorate ; the very wind fever-stricken and the green a mockery. Nothing but a heat-grey firmament above, and from horizon to horizon as far as the eye could reach waving rushes, and again waving rushes, and again. Nothing, that is to say, but the birds. For they provide the variety ; screaming, chirping, swooping, wading, their activities never cease, even in this wilderness of miasmic sleep.

Soon after our encounter with the dredger we turned into the famous cut between the Bahr-el-Zeraf and the Bahr-el-Gebel. It has been till now but little used, and we were certainly the first boat carrying white women to go through. The rich grey earth was thrown up into a high bank on either side, but the channel was too narrow to allow all three boats to move abreast; accordingly, the living-nugger was towed behind. As we neared the Bahr el Gebel we saw a big crocodile on the bank, her green-grey length extended in the sun. There were two reports, and at the second—the first had simply waked the great body into lashing energy—she kicked her life out and lay still.

We brought the steamer to a standstill, the baharis got ashore, and, running along the bank, slipped ropes around the carcass and dragged it through the water on to the nugger. Here it was skinned; and the meat, being cut into strips, joined the rest in the drying-ground on the roof of the living-nugger, and very unpleasant and fishy was the smell that was wafted to us from this, as well as from the skin. The best way to skin a crocodile is to open the body at the side,



THE MEAT HUNG OUT TO DRY.





as the belly and back form the best pieces of leather for tanning. The crocodiles are thickest near the villages, for they grow very cunning in lying in wait for the children who come to fill their water pots, or the girls at their washing. Once they have seized their victim by a limb or a piece of clothing, they drag him under and drown him first ; then eat him piecemeal.

The Bahr-el-Gebel is broader and straighter than the Bahr-el-Zeraf, and is lined on either side with dark green papyrus, the feathery heads growing as high as seven, eight or nine feet above the water, and, reflected on the perfect mirror of the oily surface, looked twice that length. Mirrored, too, was the perfect sunset that dyed the river with gold and scarlet, argosies of rose-caught cloud in the serenity of gold-green space. There was no need to look upward, a duplicate heaven lay in the water, unrippled except where we had disturbed it. It was wonderful as a revelation of the magic of atmosphere and time. It is only when such a vast canvas as a swamp or a desert is spread before her that Nature, the artist, is given her full opportunity. Then she makes of these unfavoured wastes living jewels so fair that

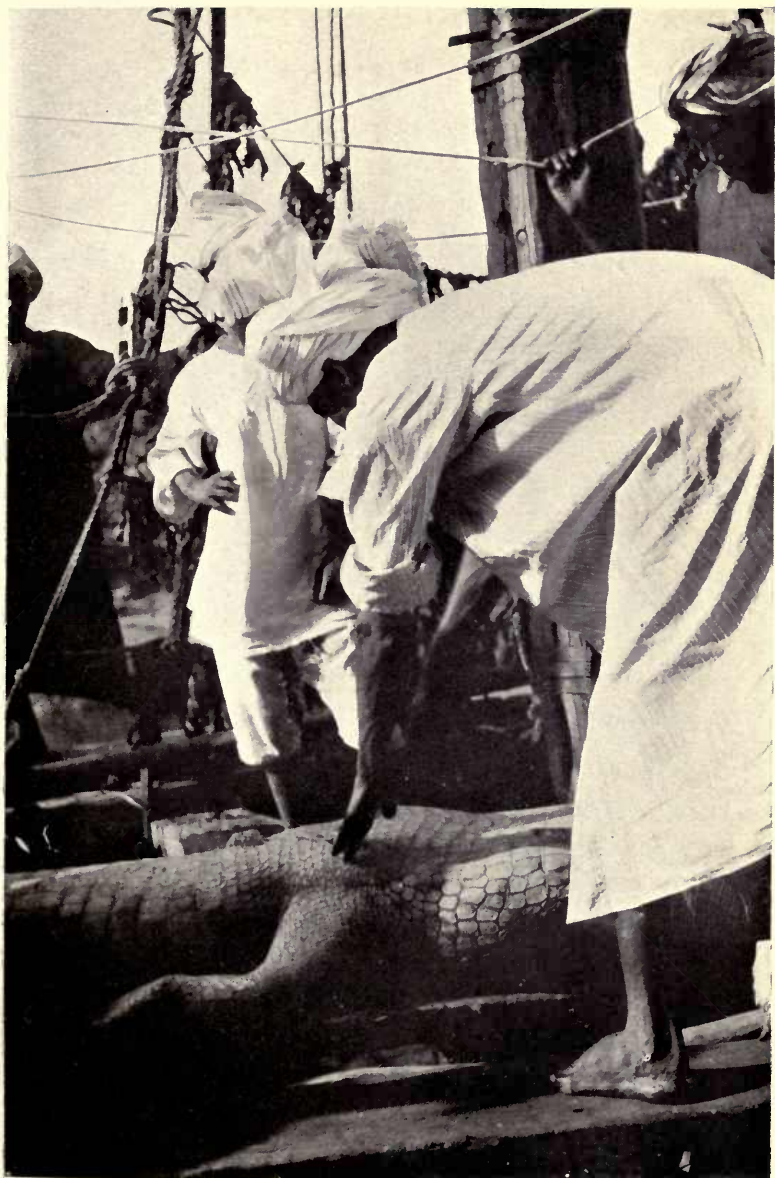
one forgets the unlovely day in the mystery and beauty of its close, and in memory the swamp and the desert draw a man's soul with an odd affection, however he may abuse them when he sojourns upon them.

Our little Habbania shikari was discovered opening a piece of sackcloth in the twilight, smoothing the sand contained therein, dimpling it with his fingers, and gazing intently at it. Now this is a method of fortune-telling\* practised by the Arabs from Arabia to Morocco, and accordingly, we bade him come on to the steamer deck to tell fortunes for us. First of all he denied being in possession of any sand, but when pressed admitted being proficient in the art of divination.

The method is simple. The inquirer first places his hand, palm downward, on the sand, or holds a handful to his heart. The sand is then levelled, and the fortune-teller, using his fingers quickly and at random, moves his hand from right to left, touching it sometimes with two, sometimes with three, sometimes with four fingers. This he does seven times, so that the sand at the end of the

\* Darb-er-Raml.



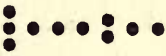




CUTTING UP THE CROCODILE.



performance is dimpled in such a way as the following :

1st line :    
 2nd line :    
 3rd line :    
 (thus for seven lines).

He then adds up the evens and odds, putting the result at the left of the lines ; thus the first line made up of three evens and four odds would result in one odd, written by a single finger-point ; the second line of four evens and three odds in an even, expressed by two finger-points, and so on. From these calculations he makes certain deductions, that the inquirer will be fortunate, travel, make money, or continue in good health. I asked him whether his own fortune in the sand had been favourable. He replied No—that his inquiry had told him that his bullocks had been taken sick and that his brother was ill. We tried to comfort him by saying that it was probably not true. He replied that when another brother had died, he had seen it in the sand.

Night had fallen, and the air, laden with hu-



midity and the vapours of the great marsh, was cold and odorous of decaying water-vegetation. We were in the heart of the mosquito country, but these tormentors, protected as we were by veils, gloves and mosquito boots, did not get much satisfaction out of us.

The next morning found us still moving steadily through the papyrus country. But, soon after breakfast, the colour of the swamp changed abruptly. A devastating grass fire had passed over it, blackened fields of it swayed in the wind, the graceful glory of plumed head and straight green stem had been turned into a mere wisp of fibre at the top of a charred straw. From the funereal waste of burnt papyrus, we came to the burning papyrus. The tall rushes were flaming close to the water's edge, indeed, we were in some concern at the sparks, though we kept in the middle of the channel. It was a wonderful sight, flames and smoke leapt sky-high, and a roaring, crackling sound was emitted as the beautiful green papyrus was licked up. The fire travelled at right angles to the river. We were glad to leave it behind.

The expanse of reed now became occasionally broken by ant-hills and a low tree here and there.





CHOPPING UP THE SUDD FOR SUDDITE.



This was elephant country, and once a shikkari raised a cry of " Fil ! " bringing us to an expectant stop for a while ; but it was a false alarm, and in any case it was too marshy to land. There was little current ; the calm water reflected everything on its motionless surface. So perfect was the illusion that the night hawks, shaped like aeroplanes, darting over the river in search of supper, seemed to move in pairs, one above, one below.

As night came on, we came upon the experimental station belonging to the Suddite Company. It was too dark to see anything, but the big barges upon which the party were encamped showed lights, and the overseer got up from bed and came over to us in a boat.

We went on shore the next morning to see the sudd-cutting party at work. The papyrus and grasses had already been cut down on the marshy ground immediately by the nugger, and the sun-bleached stubble gave fairly firm walking, though in places the water oozed up above one's boots. To right and left was the forest of high papyrus, and on slightly higher ground in the centre of the clearing was a heap of it drying in the sun, and beside it a hand-worked machine, like a sheep's

cake-crusher, to chop it up. The papyrus had been cut by hand underneath the water by the heterogeneous set of coloured ruffians who had been brought from Khartoum for the purpose. It was not an inviting spot in which to work, and there was the constant danger of crocodiles and snakes. However, the men were apparently busy enough, and we watched them putting the dried papyrus through the machine. The drying process takes about a fortnight, and after it has been chopped, the sudd is sent up to Khartoum. In the factory there it is disintegrated to what is almost a powder before it is ready to be subjected to the final processes which are to reduce it into briquettes or paper. We were informed that the cutting is eventually to be done by motors working saws underneath the water, and there is to be a factory on the spot finally selected, instead of in Khartoum. One of these motor saws was shown to us; it was not, however, working. The place was not without flowers. There was a little group of acacias in full bloom, and the morning glories, pretty slatterns, twined themselves in and out where they could.

We went on the larger of the barges tethered to the shore, and were greeted by smiles from the

women, some of whom were busying themselves with making a species of porridge with water and durra. This dish should really be made with milk, but the one emaciated and oddly built cow on shore was not apparently capable of producing any. All the women wore their hair in the usual fashion of a shock of tiny plaits. One girl was quite pretty and bare to the waist without suffering from modesty. Their gums and lips were dyed blue, a piece of coquetry which did not enhance the beauty of their appearance in European eyes. A fat brown baby, who rejoiced in many wristlets, anklets and amulets, proved to be a particularly engaging person ; he smiled, played, danced, and pretended to be shy just like any other baby, and his mother was obviously bursting with pride.

We did not linger long, but got aboard again, and by 10.30 had entered Lake No. The papyrus here gives way to umm suf again, and the flat wastes on either side were all but treeless. Little brown islands floated on the water, the sky was heavy and grey, and the air damp, hot, and oppressive. These suddscapes are mostly in tones of silver and bronze ; the colour has been burnt and washed out of them.

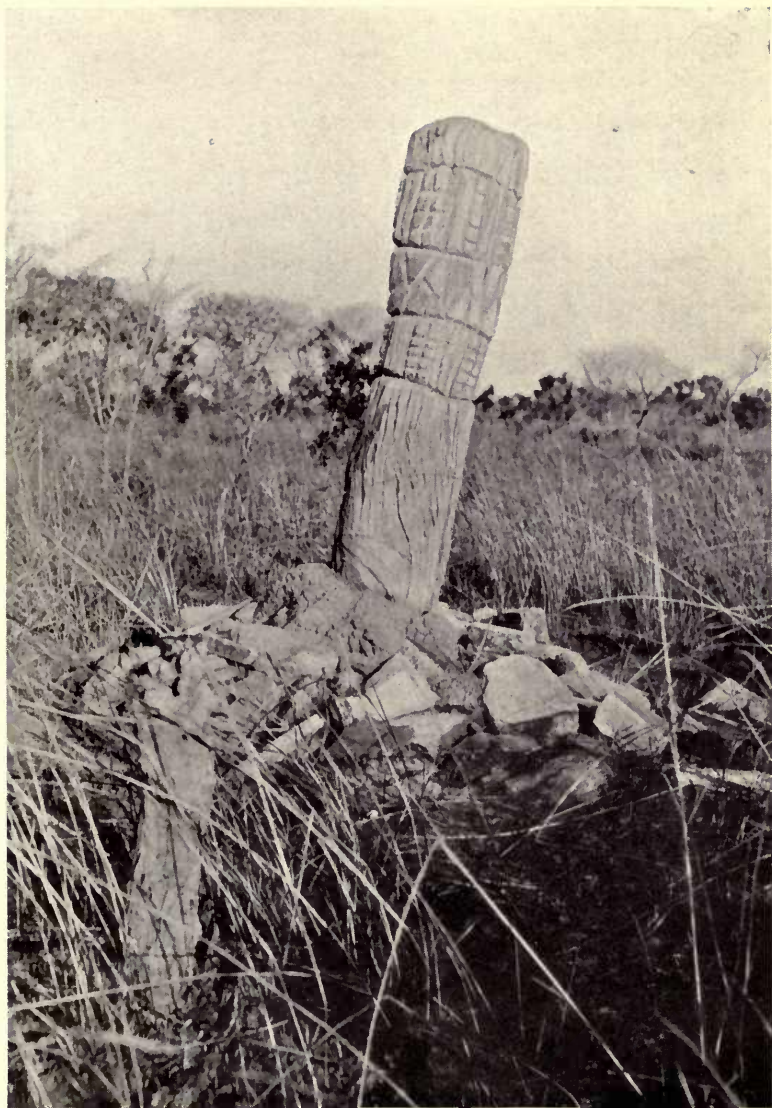


## CHAPTER XVI

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

WE were now in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the River of the Gazelle, that stream of many twists and turns called by the natives "the handwriting of the Englishman," because of its sinuous course.

An Englishman on board had spent many months in this district as inspector, and told me something of the customs and superstitions of the inhabitants. There are no rainmakers in the Bahr-el-Ghazal but, and especially in the western districts, medicine men and fikis, or religious mendicants and teachers, exercise a strong influence over the inhabitants. The fikis write charms against every evil that threatens mankind, such as charms to ensure that one will not be eaten by crocodiles, charms to prevent a wife from being unfaithful, charms to preserve cattle from disease, and so on. So numerous grow these charms, that local sultans



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

THE GRAVE OF A NIAM-NIAM CHIEF IN THE FORESTS OF THE  
SOUTHERN BAHR-EL-GHAZAL, NEAR MERIDI.





usually engage a special attendant to carry them.

The medicine men profess to heal by magic, and their methods are impressive. They first build a very thick zariba, or barricade, about a spot, take the patient into it, and keep him there for three days. Then they produce shards and stones, which they pretend to have taken out of the body, and exhibit them to the wondering relatives. Whether the patient eventually dies or not, his credulous friends are satisfied that the best has been done for him. These medicine men are brought into requisition for taking omens, and for trials by ordeal by means of fire, crocodiles, and similar tests. Divination by chickens is also practised by them.

The dead are buried in different positions, according to the tribe ; but an almost universal superstition is to point out a grave with doubled fingers, lest the ghost of the deceased should burn off the finger-tips. The tree of the village is, for some obscure reason, usually considered sacred, and this is why any important councils are held, or oaths administered, beneath its shade.

Marriage customs, too, depend on the tribe.

The Bundars (near relatives of the Niam-Niams) marry by exchange, but the English inspectors are doing their best to stop this custom, and tell them that they must obtain a Government permission to marry, or else, if there is subsequent trouble due to a dispute as to dowry, or the wife's running away, the Government will do nothing to help them. Natives are very ready to apply for assistance in the case of a runaway wife, so that the prudent bridegroom often travels hundreds of miles to get the proper equivalent of "marriage lines."

The Ferogeh tribe, in the western district of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, have their head-quarters at Raga, which is also a Government station. This tribe is composed of Moslems, who are said to have come through from Mecca by way of Darfur, conquering as they came. Their Sultan is the most powerful in the district, and the Ferogeh were never enslaved by the Dervishes, although their neighbours, the surrounding Feratit tribes, were constantly raided. Their Mohammedan principles do not prevent them from taking as many wives as they please, and the late Sultan had twenty-five. Moreover, they have some curious customs



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

SULTAN YANGO, OF THE MERIDI, A CHIEF OF A TRIBE OF ZANDES OR  
NIAM-NIAMS (BAHR-EL-GHAZAL).

(Observe the plaited beard, about nine inches long. This was pulled off by an angry wife  
about a fortnight after the photograph was taken.)





which remind one of the practices of the Sabians.

For instance, in their villages there are five or six tukls in a hosh or enclosure, and on New Year's Day each hosh is beaten furiously with clubs or staves to chase out the devils. When the devils are supposed to be expelled, the whole village clears out its fires, carrying every live ember or spark down to the river, leaving no vestige of fire in any tukl. The fire is thrown into the water, and wood is kindled by rubbing sticks one against another, the virgin fire so created being carried back to the village in triumph. The men and women in two separate bands, men together and women together, then purify themselves by bathing in the river.

At its junction with Lake No, the Bahr-el-Ghazal is much narrower than the Bahr-el-Zeraf, and game appeared so plentiful that had we stopped for every herd of waterbuck, gazelle or white-eared cob that we saw, we should never have got on at all. But, more wonderful still, was a herd of giraffe which moved literally in hundreds against the sky-line. Even here, in this country of great beasts, the giraffe had an oddly archaic look. It

was reported that a certain giraffe of snowy whiteness had been seen in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and a reward was offered for him alive or dead, but we did not come across him. A giraffe is not easy to transport when he is full grown. A certain official of Khartoum had one sent him by some one up river in the spring of 1911. The animal arrived in the custody of two Arabs, who claimed large payment. The unhappy recipient did not know what to do. To send it down to the Cairo Zoo would have cost a small fortune, and meanwhile the giraffe ate him out of house and home with its voracious appetite. I do not know what eventually happened to it—perhaps it was killed. The privilege of shooting a giraffe (in addition to a £50 licence) costs £20; to take him alive out of the Sudan means paying an export tax of £24E.

Hippos abounded, and we also saw many whale-headed storks, who moved about with an air of antediluvian dignity, secure in the fact that the law of the land forbids sportsmen to shoot at them. We twice came to a halt that the guns might go ashore, and on one occasion, instead of leaving the boats, as the heat was excessive, I stayed to watch our Arab fisherman. This Sphinx-like in-



dividual supplied us daily throughout the trip with fresh Nile fish, and never wasted an opportunity. No matter why we had stopped—for wooding, or game, or disaster, he went gravely to the end of the nugger, cast out his net, and drew it in after a moment or two with its freight of fish. The net, which was circular and weighted with lead, was thrown forwards by a swing of the left shoulder, spreading as it fell, and when the string was drawn became a trap inside which the captives struggled and flapped as they were dragged on board. Then he squatted to make his selection, hurling the useless fish aside with unconcern as to whether they fell into the water or on to the bank.

We had our camp beds brought on deck in order to enjoy the coolness of the night, and so few mosquitoes were there that our nets were scarcely needed. The crew slept where they listed, and if any one awoke at midnight, about a dozen mysterious bundles were visible lying here and there on the deck floor, so closely shrouded that they looked like corpses tumbled out of coffins, or huge white chrysalides. Just before dawn the "corpses" came silently to life, and each, as he rubbed his eyes open in the faint light, turned

his face Meccawards and went through the prostrations of the morning Namaz, for the *bahari* are devout fellows, and precise in their prayers, as becomes good Moslems. Then the chatter began on the nugger and the pleasing smell of coffee arose as the women brewed it in the little earthenware pots, and served it out in small handleless cups. Thus their day had begun. Our method of beginning with morning tea, the queue at the bathroom, elaborate dressing in a hot cabin, and plentiful breakfast, was in direct contrast ; for, in spite of our surroundings, with the usual fatuity of the English, we persisted in living at hotel pitch. The excellent Italian chef contrived several courses for each meal ; tinned vegetables were cooked with such skill as to disguise their origin ; and all the luxurious fictions of civilisation were kept up, although the crocodile slept on the bank, the elephant, lion and hippopotamus roamed in the scrub beyond, and a people, so simple that they scorned even the figleaf apron of their forefather Adam, peered at us from the ant-hills.

. . . . .

We came to a stop early, so that the men might shoot before the great heat of the day. Large

blue, sweet-scented water lilies floated on the river, and a white-flowering tree grew close to the bank where they landed. For the rest there was the usual tangle of bleached grass varied by miserable trees, and near the water a fringe of the tall dignified papyrus. The two guns brought four fine heads of white-eared cob between them, and reported that the herds were so tame that even after they had been fired upon they did not move away, but lifted surprised heads and mild eyes from their cropping.

About midday the river became friendlier in appearance, and here and there woods descended to the water's edge. This was succeeded again by papyrus country, broken occasionally by lonely dom palms and calm lagoons like liquid mirrors. In the afternoon we came on a group of some thirty or forty Nuers on the bank. Some of them had crowded on to an ant-hill, so as to get a better view of us ; figures as straight as their spears and almost as lean. We landed for a minute : the ambatches and dug-outs moored to the bank showed that they had paddled down from a village near by. They were wild and unkempt-looking creatures, all armed, some men carrying several



spears at once ; and they did not look very friendly. A trader, an Arab living at the station above, was with them and acted as our interpreter, for these men could speak nothing but their own dialect. Through this medium we learnt that they had come on a hippo hunt, and when we tried to buy a particularly fine spear, we found that its owner did not understand the use of money, except as metal to be beaten into spear-heads. Why, therefore, should he accept it in exchange for his spear ? Neither did these Arcadians deign to accept the beads which we tendered instead, beads being the usual currency when money is not understood. They said that they did not wish to part with their spears and that they had no wants except cattle-hides. If we had cattle-skins to dispose of, they could offer durra in exchange. I was surprised at a cattle-owning tribe being in want of skins, but I was told that they never kill their cattle, and only get a skin when an animal dies from natural causes.

One man, apparently their headman, acted as spokesman through the interpreter, the other gaunt, shock-headed skeletons crowded round and listened, their lower jaws falling open with amaze-

ment, and their brows deeply wrinkled as those of monkeys. Clothes, they wore none ; though one or two men had adorned themselves with the skin of a small animal of the size of a stoat. Others boasted a string of beads, others wore nothing but a single bead secured round their waists by a strip of hide-like string. Brass bracelets in fifties at a time seemed to be fashionable, and wooden beads the size of a small walnut. Their coiffures would have won a gasp from the most tousled impresario. Some wore their hair fixed into a harlequin peak or horn stiffened into shape by means of a paste made of clay and cow's dung, which process after a month is supposed to colour the hair red. Others had seemingly passed through this stage, and their heads were an unkempt mop of yellowish red. One man, perhaps just emerged from the harlequin chrysalis, wore one lock in a straight, soaring, brush-like tuft, the rest of his hair being matted closely to his head.

A few of their women had accompanied them, and these were plumper and comelier than the men. The unmarried girls were stark naked, the matrons covered their hips and breasts with skins. I presented one smiling dame with a bead necklace,

but the headman came forward and took it out of her hands for himself. I remonstrated with him by means of the interpreter, whereupon he hung it around the woman's neck with a good grace, postponing his intention of annexing it till we were out of sight.

We steamed on drowsily into the heat of the day, which became sultry. Ninety-eight in the shade is cool when one sits in a house, but in the semi-shelter of a covered deck it was sweltering, even when the canvas wind-awnings were kept soaked with water by diligent natives. We passed herd after herd of gazelle and waterbuck, but did not stop for them, nor trouble to shoot the leisurely hippopotami that raised dripping flat-skulled heads to gaze at us. The crocodiles were fired at, but we did not wait to pick them up—the one crocodile skin we already had was trying enough to the nose when the wind blew across from the nugger.

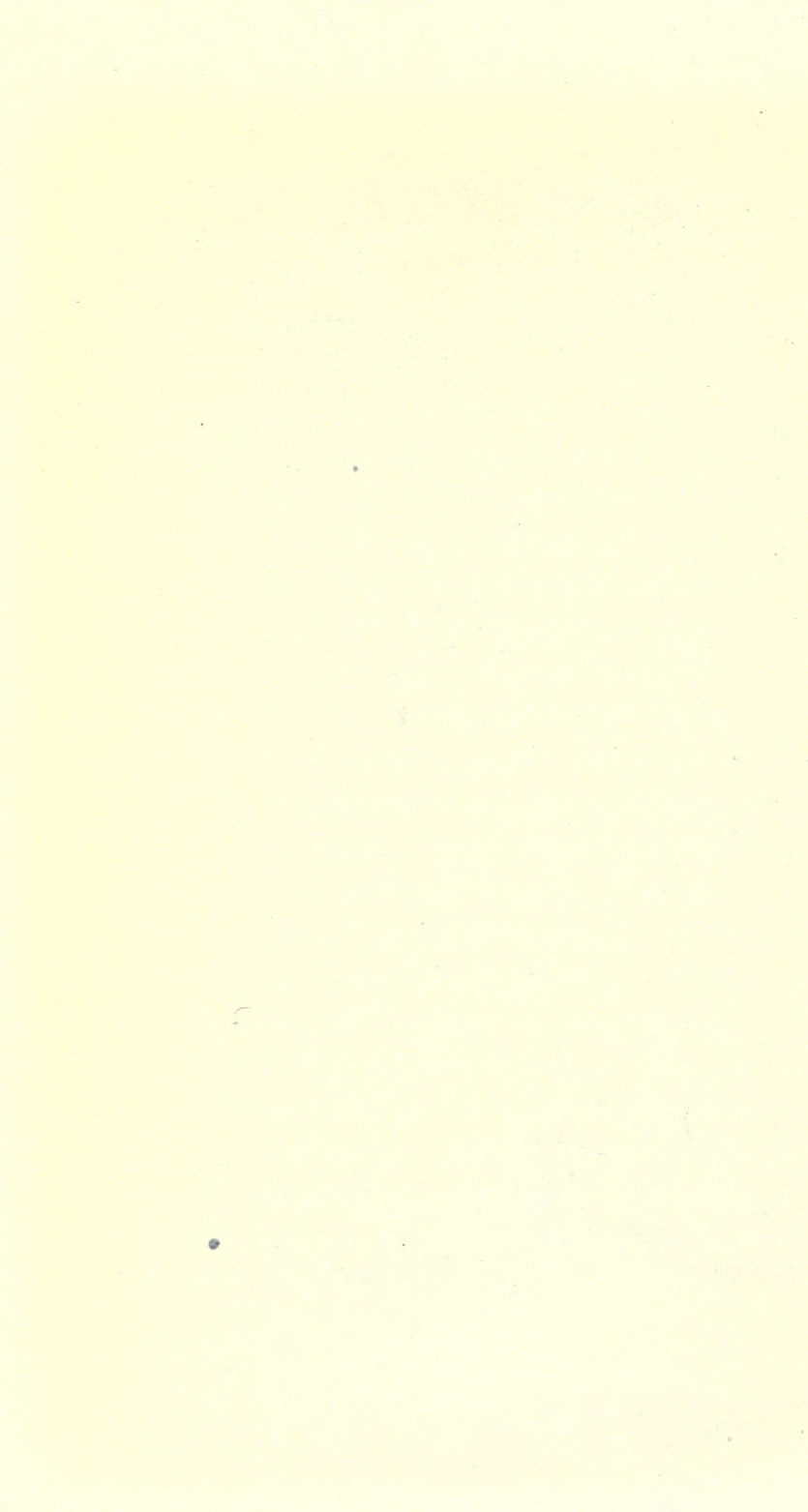
An hour before sunset every one on the boat awoke into activity and excitement, for a herd of "Mrs. Gray's" cob was seen peacefully grazing close to the bank. The pretty and rare creatures were scarcely alarmed, but the steam escape which





[S. Dunn, *Egy.*

NIAM-NIAM WOMEN TAKING WATER FROM THE UPPER COURSE OF THE NA'AM (OSTRICH) RIVER,  
NEAR MERIDI, BAHR-EL-GHAZAL.



whistled inopportunely sent most of them trotting off gently. The rest went on feeding without fear. The ground was very marshy; such an opportunity was not to be resisted, however, and after exploring the banks in a small boat, Captain D—— and Captain N—— found a tongue of hard ground. They tossed for first shot, and as Captain D—— won, he climbed on to an ant-hill, which lifted him above the grass, which stood seven feet high, and taking aim at 320 yards, shot the creature he had selected, a fine buck, stone-dead. We who were watching saw the whole performance, but when the shikaris were sent into the long grass to hunt for the animal's body, it had grown so dusk as to make it a difficult task to find anything in the high growth and swampy soil. We directed them as well as we could by pointing the direction from the deck of the ship, but they were only able to see us by leaping upwards or standing upon any ant-hill they might come across. Besides, they were often wading waist deep in water, which did not render their task easier. It was our little fortune-telling Arab who eventually found the fallen buck, and raised a joyful shout; the others then joined him, and by the last rosy light



of sunset they bore the carcass over the swamp and on to the boat, the Arabs singing songs of triumph in chanted chorus. We celebrated the death of the Mrs. Gray after our fashion with champagne at dinner, and before long the poor beast was skinned and the rails of the nugger decorated with strips of dripping red meat, after our chef had selected what he wanted.

Perhaps the smell of fresh blood attracted the mosquitoes, for they came in their legions. The sportsman is limited to one Mrs. Gray.

“It is a good thing,” said one of the three women passengers on board, as she slew three at a blow, “that we are not limited to one mosquito !”

## CHAPTER XVII

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

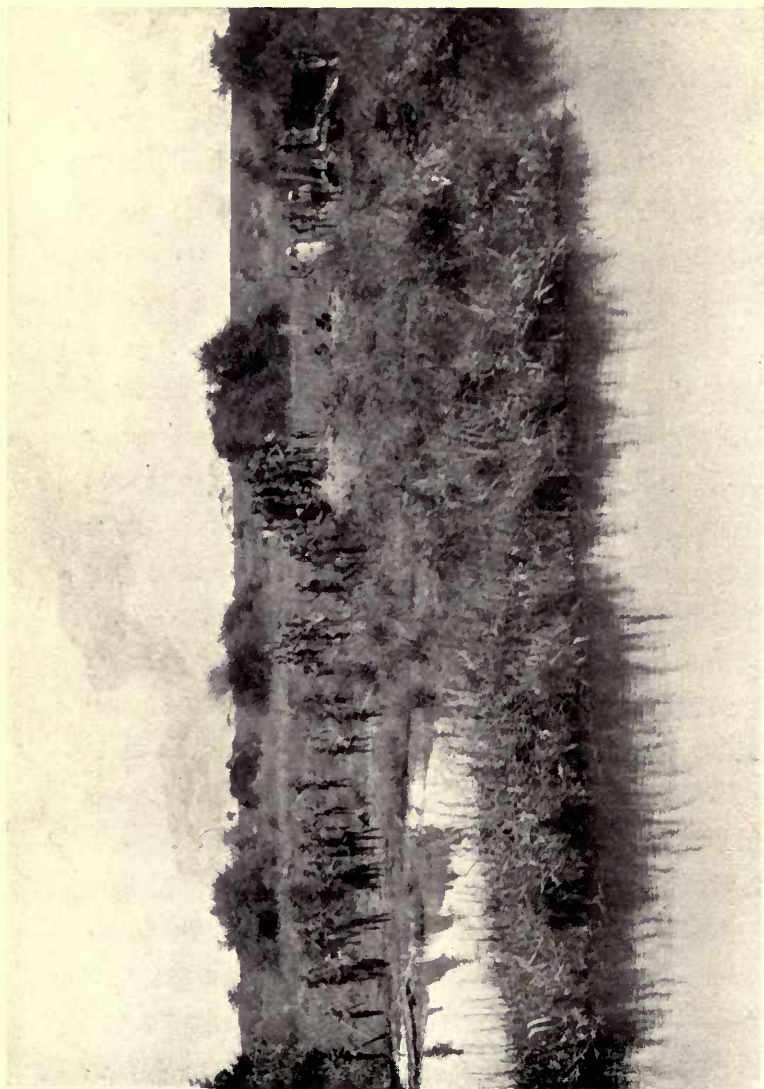
I WAS awakened in the night—for as usual I slept in the open—by a terrific grunting, snorting and splashing, close, as it seemed, to my head. When I rubbed my eyes open I realised that it was caused by a difference of opinion between two hippopotami who were fighting each other in the rushes by the bank. In this part of the river the reis did not venture to travel by night for fear of missing the channel. I would have given a great deal to witness that uncouth combat, but as it was pitchy dark and very hot, I lay still instead and listened. If the hippopotami were the principal performers in a strange duo-concerto, there was a vast orchestra to accompany them. The frogs in this marsh of leagues and furlongs kept up a continual croaking, harsh, strident, discordant, as if each frog of many

millions were striving to produce an individual and assertive note. Above this hovered a thin, faint veil of sound, so continuous as to be almost a silence—the hum of the night-flies, the mosquitoes, the sand-flies, and the multitude of insects that live in the miasma and flourish in the rotting vegetation of the Great Bog. Occasionally there were other noises, rustlings as of trodden rushes, the squelching made by some big creature at its watering, the cries of night-birds, mysterious coughs, splutterings, or cracklings, which told us that the sudd was as awake by night as it was by day, and that under cover of the darkness the life of beast, bird, and reptile proceeded as though we had never intruded into their sanctuary.

At dawn every one was astir while the sky was still petal-pink and dusky, and before seven Captain N—— and Captain A—— put ashore in the dinghy to endeavour to get their Mrs. Gray apiece. Captain N—— killed at once, and his shikari was so overjoyed, that he burst into loud shouts of “Taala, Taala !” (Come, come !) though Captain A—— was stalking the buck he had picked out at a small distance away. For this piece of indiscretion the too exuberant shikari was severely







NUERS IN THE BAHR-EL-GHAZAL.  
(The mound is an ant-heap.)

reprimanded when he reached the boat, and his comrades promptly made a song about his misbehaviour which made him abashed for some time after. However, Captain A—— was soon equally successful, killing his buck by a shot in the neck, and the animals were dragged on board by the men with rejoicing. The horns of the one measured 28 inches long and 19 inches span, and of the other  $29\frac{1}{4}$  inches long and 16 inches span. To have shot three good head of these rare animals within twenty-four hours was considered an achievement.

The aspect of the banks now changed rapidly ; they became thickly wooded—in fact, so different was it to the barren sudd country we had left behind us, that we might have easily imagined ourselves in the Thames, with fat pasture land running down to the reed-fringed water. Had such an illusion existed, it would soon have been dispelled, for every now and again we came on Nuers, slim gentry daubed with clay and naked save for a bracelet of elephant ivory, standing on the ant-hills which are the conning towers of this district, to watch us pass. We were in need of fuel, and the *bahari*, when questioned if a wooding station were near, replied with true Sudanese



vagueness, "Baid shwòya" (A little far). It is almost impossible to get a Sudanese to calculate a distance.

Euphorbia trees grew plentifully by the river (these trees yield the poison with which the warrior envenoms his arrows); and by them grew the *tamar hindi* or tamarinds, with their vivid green foliage. Sunbirds flashed crimson, teal flew up in whirring flocks, landrails, peewits and long-legged water-birds, disturbed by our churning wheel, rose as we passed or watched us from the banks. The atmosphere was less lethargic; we had left the region of desolation behind us.

At one o'clock we steamed past a picturesque village (Ghabat-el-Arab). Its outskirts were composed of small huts constructed like mole-hills, of mud with holes on the top through which the householder crawls down into the dwelling. There were tukls too, and by the water's edge grew the village tree, in the shade of which many of the inhabitants were seated. The wooding station was below, in the Bahr-el-Arab, so we turned off into that river, and came to a halt by the familiar stacks of logs. There was a crowd of women on the banks, chiefly natives of Omdur-





THE HARLEQUIN COIFFURE OF THE NUER WARRIOR.  
(The other warrior has dyed his hair red.)



man, sent up with their husbands by the Government, and these squatted on the ground and offered cakes of tamarind, honey, durra bread, eggs, and so on, in exchange for money, meat, and other eatables. One little woman told us that she was a Dinka from a village up-country, and that years ago she had been carried off by slave-raiders and sold in Alexandria. Under our rule she returned to Omdurman, married and came up-river with her husband. She wore a lump of crocodile musk, much prized on account of its perfume, as the central ornament of a necklace.

Some Nuers, with their usual contempt for work, leant up against the pile of wood and looked on, some with their hair moulded into a horn, others wearing the usual Golliwog tangle. I was told by Captain A——, who has had a great deal to do with this tribe, that the three deep furrows in the forehead which give the braves such an anxious expression, are due to incisions made in the skin, as the wrinkles so formed are considered an adornment. One man wore a rope anklet, this being a sign of mourning for a relative. Another, an aged man who was the headman of the village we had just passed, bore in his hand a stick crooked at

both ends—the *kuggur* magic stick or wand of authority of his tribe. It was decorated with rings of white metal and brass, and was altogether an impressive object. When I approached him to inspect it, he held up one hand sideways for some time in greeting, the other being engaged with a big knobkerry or bludgeon, and several spears. His wife, naked except for a fringe around her waist, bore his pipe and squatted at his side. His attendants stood like slim black statues, the left foot supported against the right knee, which is the custom of all the riverine people, and gives them a resemblance to water-birds.

The ceremonial stick to which I have referred is brought into requisition for public fêtes, such as a village marriage; and a wedding was probably the cause of its appearance in this case. It is accredited with magic properties, and represents the luck of the tribe.

The wooding process had been much enlivened by the antics of one huge black porter, who, excited by merissa, performed a comic dance, to the huge enjoyment of our *baharia*; and as we had dispensed largesse in the form of blue beads, we left a very smiling crowd behind us when we

steamed away, this time with the current, for we had reached the farthest point of our journey, and now were homeward bent.

But we stopped for a few moments at Ghabat-el-Arab, tempted by its beauty. It was a cleanly little village, and the straw tukls were well built, many of them being decorated by an ostrich egg placed on the roof. The people seemed friendly and interested; a crowd of them stood under the sacred tree as we landed, men and women together. The women were for the most part clad only in the string fringe about the loins, but a few of the married women wore goatskins behind embroidered with cowrie shells and fastened to their waists like an apron worn backwards. A few less coquettish but more sophisticated ladies wore a loin-cloth of blue cotton, and flung a tobe of the same material around themselves at the approach of a stranger.

One mother, wearing a string fringe or *rahat*, was crooning to her baby in front of her tukl, a bonny, plump man-child of a month old, its neck hung round with charms. She was pleased to hold it up that we might admire it, for motherhood is the same all the world over, and black babies

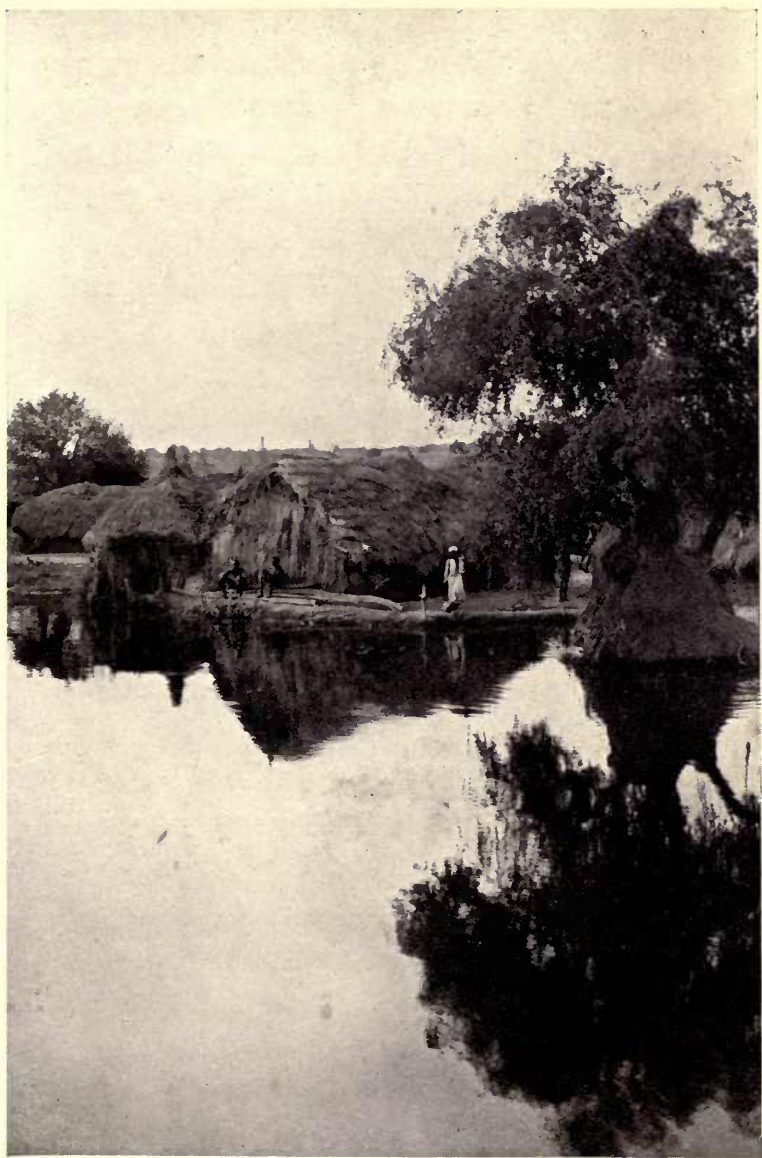


have just the same tricks and instincts as their white cousins. I noticed that a straw palisading divided the village into twisted streets, and that these alleys often ended abruptly in a blank wall or zariba, possibly in order to mislead an attacking force. Captain A—— said that if the local Sultan, an old friend of his, had happened to be in the village, he would have had to submit to a spit in the face, as that form of salutation is considered a great honour. The ordinary mode of greeting a friend is to hold up the hand as high as the head, with the five fingers spread, or to embrace his shoulders, clasping each alternately.\* Once is not considered enough, the ceremony must be repeated many times before the demands of politeness are satisfied.

The thermometer had registered 100 in the shade during the day, and at night, so hot was it, that I found it in my heart to envy the hippos which were to be heard gambolling and snorting in the water.

The next day was equally hot. We sighted

\* "The attitude of respect differs in each of these (Nuer) tribes; in one it is sitting, in another crouching with bent shoulder, and so on" (Captain O'Sullivan's Report).



GHABAT-EL-ARAB.





some Mrs. Gray during the morning, but as our limit had been reached, there was no object in landing for them. Our real hope was to get elephant. We had been for many days in elephant country, and though we had seen plenty of spoor, and had several false alarms, we had not yet come into direct contact with that monarch of big game. Therefore there was great excitement when one of the shikaris, scanning the brown, scorched tangle of underwood about lunch-time, gave vent to a long thin cry of "Fil! Fil!"

We all came scrambling up the stairs to the top deck armed with field-glasses, and, sure enough, against the horizon in the universal yellowy brown of the scrub some miles away, something was moving faintly visible, something big. It was undoubtedly a herd of elephants. Lots had already been drawn as to which two of the three guns should land, for it is not wise to hunt the wild elephant in large parties. Accordingly, Captain A—— and Captain N——, being the fortunate ones, started at once with their shikaris. Captain N—— had never been on an elephant shoot before, but Captain A—— was an old hand. It is a form of sport not unattended by grave danger, so we who

were on the boat listened attentively for the shots. In the meanwhile I went on shore. The ground was grey and deeply cracked by drought, and the vegetation consisted of low sunt trees, thorns and tall bleached grass, the whole sucked dry and colourless by the sun. Cocoons hung on the low twigs and on the grasses, and there were innumerable spoor of wild beasts.

After about an hour or an hour and a half we heard five reports in succession. We waited anxiously. Then followed silence for half an hour, then eight shots close together. This we could not altogether understand, and consequently were relieved when after another half-hour had passed one shikari returned with the information that they had come upon the herd, which consisted of fifteen animals, and that they had successfully killed one bull elephant. He had come for more men to help in cutting up the animal. The men started at once, and soon afterwards I followed them with two shikaris as guides. We had to traverse the forest of sunt trees, the deep fissures and stiff blackened grass and tangle of thorns making it difficult going; besides these obstacles dried elephant footmarks a foot deep were traps

to trip the unwary. After a quarter of an hour we plunged into a marsh, thick with coarse rushes, the muddy water surging up to our waists as we ploughed our way through.

The dead elephant lay in the thicket beyond, and when we had crossed the marsh to terra firma on the other side, and emerged soaking and muddy, our nostrils were assailed by a revolting stench. A few steps further brought us to the spot. The carcass was on its side, and seemed enormous as it lay thus prone and inert. The sides were somewhat fallen in, owing to the removal of much of the inside, and our little Habbania Arab was actually at work inside the horrid cave of the belly, literally covered with blood from head to foot, and very gleeful. The animal was already half-skinned, but I was obliged to withdraw from the sickening sight to a little distance, and started back at sunset over the marsh again. The tusks, or *sinoon*, had already been hewn off and conveyed to the boat; and the men that accompanied me back bore away the ears, each the size of an hotel doormat. Captain A—— and Captain N—— told us that they had come across the herd early in the proceedings, and saw them all quietly cropping



grass with their trunks and stuffing it into their mouths. The attacking party got down wind behind an ant-hill and wounded one bull, the whole herd starting off pell-mell through the wood. A little while later the guns came up with the herd again, sought the shelter of another ant-hill, and fired. They were well down wind, but the wounded animal, infuriated, somehow scented their whereabouts, and charged them at close quarters. Captain N—— said he had rarely experienced a more paralysing feeling than that caused by the sight of the huge creature when it thundered right at them with lifted trunk ; but a second well-placed bullet from Captain A——'s rifle brought him down, and several more finished the work.

An elephant judges where his enemies are entirely by smell, as his small eyes are very short-sighted, and his trunk twists this way and that as he sniffs the air to get wind of the danger. Captain A—— told me that on one occasion an elephant succeeded in getting hold of his shikari, and seizing the unfortunate man in his trunk, battered him to a shapeless mass against the trees. The natives display great prowess in killing elephants ; indeed, a girl will say to her lover, " I will not believe that

you are a brave man until you have killed an elephant." One brave gallops backwards and forwards on horseback in front of the animal until it is bewildered, then another darts forward swiftly, hurls his spear at the one vital spot, and kills the elephant. That they can manage to worst such an enormous and dangerous animal with nothing but dexterity and their spears to aid them, and that they contrive to drive their feeble weapons into the thick hide, is little short of a miracle.

It is strange how, if game has been killed, no matter how deserted and uninhabited the forest has seemed before, some natives will spring up as if from the ground in time to come in for a share of the meat.

As if by magic, during the afternoon some Nuers had appeared and had watched proceedings from the top of an ant-heap ; likewise a reverend-looking whale-headed stork from another. The Nuers offered to help our men, and accordingly, at about half-past ten, two of them walked out of the scrub to the boats, bearing the elephant's feet on their heads. Their yellow mops of hair, protruding teeth, and black, naked bodies, did not give them

a very taking appearance, but they were well-disposed, and sat down on the bank to watch us. We offered them a present of beads, but they refused them; probably the beads were out of fashion, for the Arab traders say that the natives will not look at beads which have been the rage only a short while before, so quickly do the modes change. The merchants, therefore, must keep in touch with the vagaries of the season if they wish to sell their goods. Money, too, was refused by the ingenuous pair, but they were delighted with a present of a glass bottle, a coat-button and some brass wire. The button was forthwith made into a pendant. Half an hour later we started again down river, the new meat adding considerably to the odours from the roof of the living-nugger. Strips of black elephant hide were spread out to dry on all sides, the scooped-out feet were set out to be sun-cured the next morning, and every time the wind blew across we were reminded unpleasantly of the smell of slaughter-houses.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### TO THE SUDD AND BACK—(*continued*)

THERE is always something depressing about a return voyage : a demoralised feeling, an inertia, prevents one from keeping a satisfactory log ; and I cannot find much worthy of record in my notes of our second journey through the sudd, back to Lake No. We were persecuted by serut flies, and killed some white-eared cob, but on the whole lost interest. We reached Khor Attar, where we had wooded on the way up, at about ten o'clock one glaring, flaring forenoon, the temperature being already 92 in the shade. The men took off the elephant tusks in order to scrape them on shore amid a group of vaguely attracted Shilluks, undraped as ever, their faces plastered with pink clay, their plumed spears in their hands, one foot drawn up so as to rest on the other knee in their favourite attitude. A little farther on

there was a little crowd and a certain air of commotion, and this drew me towards the village, where, in front of one tukl, there was a strange collection of objects. Large white flags, one bearing the Star and Crescent, another an inscription from the Koran, and the rest as blank as handkerchiefs, were flapping idly beside the little straw dwelling; a *rebabi* or Sudanese fiddle was placed on a chair; many native drums, pots and pans, gourds, earthen braziers for the burning of incense, and what not, strewed the ground. Finally, two women were squatted beside this assortment of bric-à-brac, cleaning and cutting up two sheep, while yellow pariah dogs, their mien apologetic and wistful, prowled about in hope of catching the scraps of offal which the busy, smiling dames occasionally tossed to them with their blood-stained black fingers.

When cleaned, the sheep were hung on a horizontal bar, ready for roasting.

On inquiry, I found that these apparently festive preparations were for funeral celebrations that night, a woman having died. A great *diluka* was to be held that night, and seas of merissa were to be drunk; the revelries, dancing and drinking to be

kept up for three days, it being the custom to celebrate the death of a person in much the same manner as his wedding.

At half-past twelve we arrived at Taufikia, but did not stop. Blasts of wind, so hot that they seemed to issue from the mouth of a great furnace, reduced us to a state of great irritation. There were troops stolidly drilling, and English officers patiently grilling, and thinking no doubt with fierce anticipation of summer leave. I noticed many crocodiles lying together in sixes and sevens on the bank, dozing in loathly fashion, or slipping into the water at our approach. The crocodile has the same slow furtiveness as the cockroach and other vermin. We dealt out death to a few of them. At four o'clock, as if by miracle, a few drops of rain fell, the shower continuing for five or ten minutes, the first I had seen for several months. It scarcely wetted the decks, but we enjoyed it bareheaded. Shortly afterwards we passed a pretty village called Wau—not to be confounded with the larger Wau in the Bahr-el-Ghazal.

The night was heavy, as if with impending rain, and about eight o'clock the next day there was



a sharp downfall, which did not, however, freshen the air. The day was damp and grey and English-looking, and the White Nile became transformed into a dingy current flowing dismally through a miserable country. Truly it is only the magic of light and atmosphere that makes the beauty of Africa. Crocodiles and hippos abounded ; they apparently appreciated the change of weather. It was still steamy and hot, as if we were in a forcing-house.

Soon after we had passed Jebel Ahmed Agha, the wind changed round from south to north, and the river became so rough that we shipped a great deal of water. In order to prevent the nugger from being swamped, we had to turn into the bank and to abandon the idea of progress till the next day. That too, when it dawned, proved to be very windy, and we made but slow headway against it. At Renk wooding station, which is considerably below Renk, we stopped for fuel, and our little Habbania Arab left us to return to his home and children. We gave him presents of money, beads and jewellery, and in consequence he was one beam of delight as he bade us farewell, saying many times, " Mabrouk ! Mabrouk ! "

(Good luck !). He had certainly proved himself an excellent and enthusiastic shikari, and a chit to that effect joined the collection of precious papers tied up in his turban.

In the course of a conversation at lunch about the railway to El Obeid, which, as I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, has brought the Government within reach of Darfur, Captain A—— told us that one sheikh is said to have made the remark, “ Ali Dinar would be wise to return and take a pension while he can ! ” This would seem to show that in native opinion the days of the Darfur Sultanate are numbered since the coming of the railway.

Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur, is a picturesque tyrant whose dominion holds good over territory as big as England ; and many tales are current about him. He has a large standing army, and four thousand cavalry, and so exacting is the state kept up by this dusky monarch that those who approach him must prostrate themselves to the ground and touch the dust with their foreheads on pain of instant death. In cruelty, Ali Dinar outdoes even the Khalifa. A certain merchant sold an English spring mattress to a native Sultan

in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and the fame of this article of luxury spread abroad even unto the kingdom of Darfur. Thereupon the merchant received shortly afterwards a letter from Ali Dinar, asking why the bed had not been offered to him, as he could have paid twice the sum. The merchant hastened to reply that he would himself bring a similar bed to Darfur without delay. Accordingly he set out, but no sooner had he arrived, after many days' toilsome journey, than he was summoned into the presence of Ali Dinar, violently reproached for having given first choice to a negro potentate instead of to an Arab Sultan, and then cut up into several hundred pieces.

This amiable person has a harem composed of four hundred wives besides other women, and from these he selects twelve to be in special attendance every night. These twelve are marshalled into an enclosure in which there are three houses, and four women are placed in each house. For fear of assassination, no one outside the enclosure is allowed to know in which house the Sultan has deigned to pass the night, and none of the four women in the house he so honours is permitted to close an eyelid until the day has dawned and their



lord has left the enclosure. Should they do so, the penalty is death. In addition to these precautions, a guard of twenty men is stationed within the enclosure, and an outer guard is on duty to protect him in case he wishes to leave the enclosure during the night. Like the Commander of the Faithful, Ali Dinar has a habit of wandering about at night, and eavesdropping under cover of darkness, so that he may learn what his subjects think of him. If by chance he overhear an adverse opinion, woe to that man who has delivered it, for ways of death are many in Darfur.

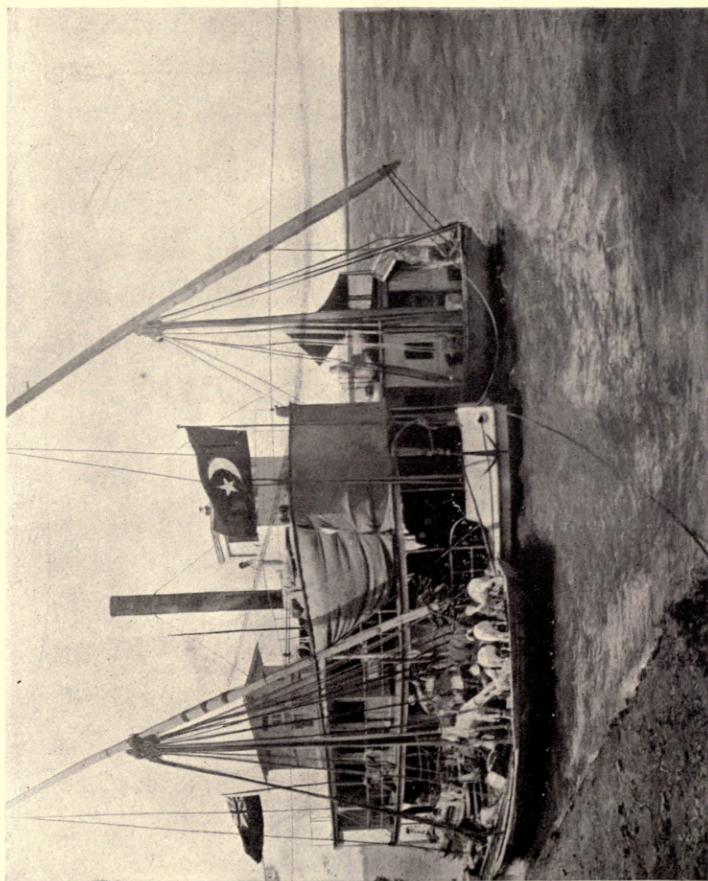
In appearance he is a negroid Arab of powerful build ; his eyes are somewhat bloodshot, and he wears a beard. He is the descendant of a long line, his forefathers having been Sultans of Darfur for four hundred years. He is a vain man, and is said to use a European bath, not for purposes of cleanliness, but that once a week it may be filled with fat, in which he lies up to the neck, so that he may become strong. He is, of course, immensely rich, and pays a yearly tribute to the Anglo-Egyptian Government.

. . . . .

The afternoon had been terribly hot and sunless,

and the wind, which was strongly against us, was as hot as a living flame. Bush fires roaring up into the sky did not lessen the heat. "It is a wretched country, and not worth keeping," wrote Gordon in his journal. The late King Leopold is said to have remarked that he would not accept the Sudan if it were served to him on a silver salver. Yet every mile now brought us nearer Khartoum, the seat of the government which has made optimism a watchword. That the Sudan is worth keeping, even at a cost, has been proved. Its wretchedness is being fought inch by inch by resolute Englishmen—with but small success, it is true, yet progress is steady, and must tell in the end. But nothing on earth can make it a white man's country.

We were seated quietly at dinner that evening, when a sudden scrunching and grating sent us all to our feet, and then on to the upper deck to see what had happened. We had struck a rock! In this part of the river there is only one submerged rock, and that almost a tradition, but we had been unlucky enough to run on to it. Had the river been lower the damage might have been serious, but as it was, no harm was done. As the nuggers



OUR STEAMER FLANKED BY THE TWO NUGGERS.





were shipping a good deal of water, however, almost drowning the unfortunate donkeys and live-stock, we grounded ourselves, and waited in hope that the wind would go down. The next morning was no better, and after ploughing our way against the gale for a little while, we were forced to put into shore again, close to Jebelein. The men made use of the enforced halt to go off and shoot gazelle in the desolate-looking marsh-land, which gave forth a disagreeable stench.

That night brought us to Kosti, and the next day to El Dueim. Twenty-four hours after we had left Dueim, I was awakened at dawn by the creaking song of the sakya, familiar and monotonous, from the bank above. We had completed our journey, and were once more in Khartoum, once more back in civilisation.

The hot season exodus had already begun, some going-home to Europe, others to the Lebanon in Syria or to Cyprus, where many Anglo-Egyptians find health and cool breezes in the summer camps on high places ; others, less fortunate, to the hill stations of Erkowit or Sinkat in the Sudan itself. For the Sudan has summer resorts (the expression must be used comparatively), these being situated

in the hills which command the Red Sea coast. They are reached by the Port Sudan railway, and of the two, though more inaccessible owing to the fact that it is distant from the railway station by some hours of camel or *tonga*, Erkowit is the pleasanter. The Governor-General has a house there, bungalows have been built and are to be hired for the summer at low rates, there is a small golf course, and shrubs and trees break the sandy monotony of the hills. And, of course, there is a view—many views—of the sun-dried hills and valleys in air as clear and rare as ether, for Erkowit is 3,800 feet above the sea-level. In the neighbourhood there is shooting—gazelle, ibex, wart-hog, and so on.

A few, for all cannot go on leave at once, remain to sweat away the hot months at their ordinary posts, in a temperature which rises to 115 and 116 in the shade during the daytime and remains stifling through the night. In the dog-days of Khartoum that company of white men is small and quiet, for the white women have gone to other climes, the visitors have long since fled, and the heat does not leave one much energy for small talk or games. It is only when the North wind





[S. Dunn, Esq.

ERKOWIT, THE HILL STATION OF THE SUDAN.

(Showing the "candelabra euphabia" and other varieties of Red Sea hills vegetation.)



begins to blow that the heavy oppression of damp heat is lifted ; for the South wind brings with it the moist vapours and intolerable heat of Central Africa ; it bears on its wings the miasma from the great Sudd region, and the fevers which breed in it. There the rains have begun, the sullen tropical rains that wash the soul of any white man who may be forced to linger in the country ; the steaming, soaking, pitiless rains of the tropics, which smite the earth as with living swords.



## CHAPTER XIX

### SOMETHING ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE

#### “ FOK ”

I HAVE said in a former chapter that I would later on discuss the Dinkas by themselves, and this seems the proper chapter for such a discussion. The principal Dinka tribes are the Abialang Dinkas, inhabiting the eastern side of the Nile from Karshawal to Melut, their territory embracing Niel ; the Rueng Dinkas, who have their home in the Sudd district about Tonga, Khor Atar and Lake No ; the Gnok Dinkas in a small territory from Taufikia to Abwong, near the Anuak country ; the Shish or Honey Dinkas on the western bank of the Bhar-el-Gebel between Shambe and Bor ; and the Twi Dinkas, who are settled in a wide district extending roughly some hundred and twenty miles north of Bor on the east bank of the Bahr-el-Gebel.

Of these the Northern Dinkas are beginning

gradually to lose their primitive simplicity, their unsophisticated manners and their strictness towards the moral observances. For in the eyes of the Southern Dinka, to wrong a man's honour in the person of his wife is a crime deserving of death, while such an offender, in the North, will get off with a bribe of cattle. In neither case is the woman punished. In short, many of their laws, based upon the most fundamental principles of property-protection and tribal growth, would serve as models for the code of an ideal State managed by eugenisists. No tolerance is shown, the eye and the tooth are rigorously exacted, but however extreme the penalties may seem to us, it is impossible to deny the soundness of the bases upon which their code has been raised.

Religion does not enter into their laws as a deciding factor. Common sense and the inherited instinct of healthy development do. The Dinkas wear but little clothing, modesty and shame would be words incomprehensible as applied to consciousness of the body ; yet the morality of a Dinka village would put the morality of any country village in rural England to the blush. And this is not due to any vague and ill-defined

ethical sense ; it is due to the fact that hard experience has taught them that human life is wealth, just as, in a lesser degree, cattle are wealth ; that woman is a valued property ; and that an offence against a woman is an offence against the race. The tribe which possessed healthy children would later possess able warriors, and the tribe which protected its women would have those children.

Their religion is simple. They are Theists, in fact they have the same root idea of Theism as the Chinese. There is a Supreme Spirit, they say, called Dengdit, who rules all things both in heaven and earth, and is accredited with beneficence and benevolence. According to the tales and legends collected by the British missionaries at Bor, the first man and woman, the Adam and Eve of Dinka tradition, were called Gurungdit and Abungdit. In time, Abungdit, during her husband's absence, gave birth to twin boys. One baby was very beautiful, his skin being black, soft and glossy ; the other was as red as raw meat or as the English ; in fact, Abungdit thought him not to be compared in any way to her black offspring. So she decided to keep the black baby for herself ; and on her



husband's return, gave him the red-skinned child ; concealing his brother in her hut, and not telling any one of his existence.

Abungdit presented the red child to Dengdit, who, to quote directly from the tale,—

“ started him in life with many good possessions, cattle, guns and many kinds of splendid food and clothing. At last the little black child began to ask his mother for gifts, but she could give him nothing but a spear. Seeing that he could get nothing more from his mother, he decided to go and ask his father Gurungdit for good things like those of his brother. So he journeyed to his father's hut.

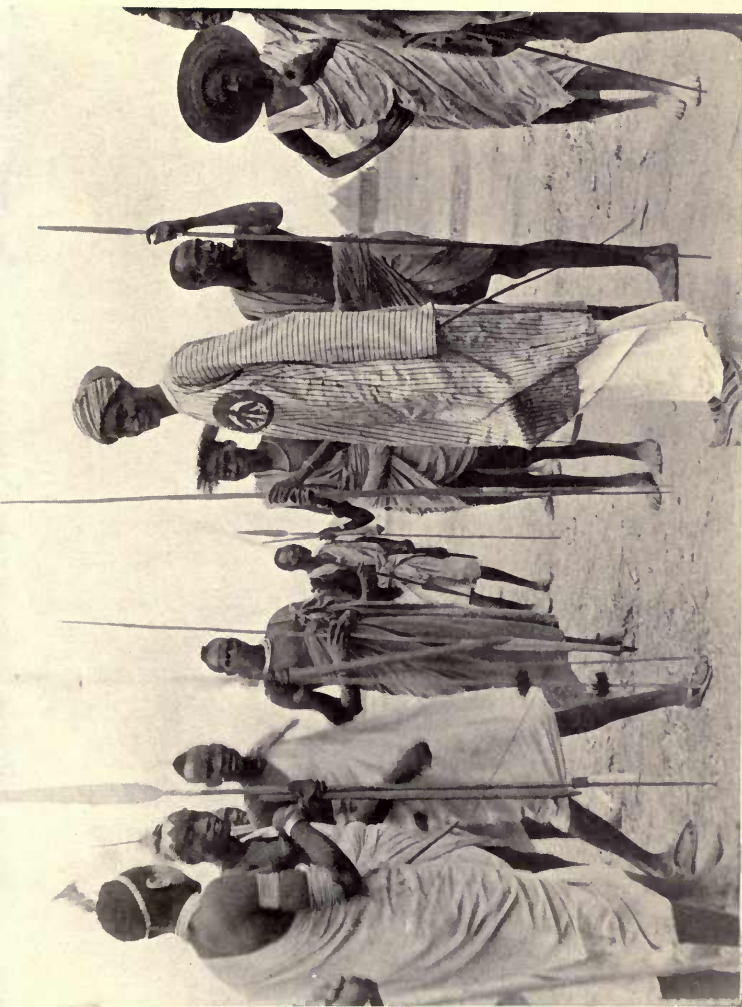
“ But when Gurungdit saw the black child and found that he had been thus deceived, he was very wroth, and refused to listen to the request. ‘ Then,’ said the child, ‘ I will sit here at the door till you grant me what I ask.’ So every night, when Gurungdit went to bed, there sat the little black child still. At last, wearied by his importunity, Gurungdit gave him one little cow-calf. And that is why the Dinkas have only cattle and spears, while the English have guns and clothes, many kinds of food, and in fact all the good things of life.”

These stories are so interesting, that I am

tempted to quote more of them. They are usually regarded as secret by the Dinkas, and one old man in the tribe is appointed to hand on the tales to the youths of the rising generation. Arabic-speaking Dinkas rarely relate any of the genuine legends, but if asked to do so, often invent a story for their hearers. But the missionaries occasionally glean them from Dinka boys, who, as Bishop Gwynne writes, "will sometimes stop in the middle suddenly as if they remembered that they were speaking forbidden words."

I reprint those which were given by the missionaries to Bishop Gwynne, in the hope that they will collect more of this valuable material, so important to those who will in the future study the folk-lore of Central Africa.

"Long, long ago there was no fire. When the Dinkas caught fish they cut them in pieces and placed them in pots in the sun. When the heat caused the fat to melt, they would drink the liquid fat and eat the flesh raw. One day the Dog was hunting far away in the forest. A great storm began, and he was soon wet and shivering with the cold. So he crept into a hole for shelter. And this hole was by chance the home of the Snake, and in it was a fire. The Dog liked the warmth



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

THE "OMDA" (CHIEF MAN) OF THE DINKAS AT MELUT WITH A FEW OF HIS BODYGUARD.

(The Omda is very little under seven feet in height.)





and crept backwards gradually towards the fire. 'Nephew,' said the Snake, for the Snake is uncle to the Dog, 'you will burn yourself.' 'Uncle,' replied the Dog, 'Very good.' So he crept farther back, until at last his tail caught fire. So he was terrified and sprang from the hole, and as he fled through the forest the grass and bushes burst into flame. The Dinkas then saw a red glow on the horizon, and went out with broken potsherds and gathered the still glowing charcoal and carried it back to the villages. And now, when a man is angry with his dog and would beat him, one standing by will say, 'Don't beat the dog. Did not the Dog bring the fire, and the fire give you good food?' "

Another resembles our nursery rhyme, "Hey-diddle-diddle."

"The first cow of all fell down from Heaven and, falling head foremost, struck the earth with its face, breaking its front teeth. And that is why a cow has only one row of teeth in front. A dog stood by and, seeing the cow thus fall upon its face and break its teeth, laughed so heartily that to this day his mouth stretches back through his cheeks to his ears."

#### THE HAWK AND THE ROPE

"In the far back ages there was once a rope

suspended between Heaven and Earth. Up this rope men would pass to Heaven, and down it the Angels would descend to Earth. So there was constant communication between Heaven and Earth, and men knew and talked with God. But one fateful day the Hawk, an evil bird, passed through the air and bit the rope through with its beak. And since that day there has been no communication betwixt Heaven and Earth, and now men know not God, nor what goes on in Heaven, nor how they may win an entrance."

" THE VULTURE AND THE ATOIT

" Once upon a time a man asked the question, 'What happens to a man when he dies?' A Vulture overheard the question, and taking a porridge-stirrer (a stick fitted into the section of a backbone), he dropped it into the river. The porridge-stirrer disappeared beneath the surface, but later on, because of the buoyancy of the wood, it rose to sight again. 'That,' said the Vulture, 'is what happens to man. First he passes out of sight, and afterwards he rises again.' But the Atoit, a little bird with a pale blue breast and head, and a crimson spot over either ear, contradicted the Vulture. He took a piece of broken potsherd and dropped this into the river. It plunged beneath the surface and, sinking to the



bottom, stayed there. 'That,' said the Atoit, 'is what happens to man when he dies.' So the Dinkas hate the little bird that gave them no hope, but they love the Vulture that tried to tell them of a better fate."

And Captain O'Sullivan, formerly Governor of the Upper Nile Province, tells the following story collected from a Dinka :

"In the days of the great Sheikh Aiwel, the big chief, when we were a powerful tribe, a discussion arose as to where the Sun went at night and left the world cold. Aiwel was a great man and inspired ; he was born of an old woman who had never had children and was beyond the age of child-bearing, and his father was the "waters of the great river (the Nile)." And Aiwel said, 'Why do you talk so much of it?—it is only necessary to go and see. Direct a party to follow it on its course each day, and one day they will find its place of rest.' So some of the young men were appointed to find out, and they went, and were absent for very many moons, for they could not return without the knowledge for fear of the anger of Aiwel and the laughter of their sisters ; but one day a few old men came into the Dinka country, and asked for their relations, some of whom were dead ; these proved to be the survivors of the

young men who had followed the Sun ; and they told the people of their journey, and how they had followed until those left alive came to the end of the land, ' where there was very great water which was salt, and each night they saw the Sun sink into this water far off, and so it was cooled like a hot spear-blade which is dipped into the river, and so we have come back to tell our chief Aiwel.' ”

Like all primitive peoples, the Dinkas are extremely superstitious and credulous. In common with most of the tribes of the Southern provinces, they believe firmly in rain-makers—namely, that a magic power is embodied in some people which enables them to induce, or withhold, a rainfall. The power is said to pass from father to son, and a long drought is unhealthy for a man of rain-making blood, for he may be accused of wilfully withholding rain, and may be killed in order that it may fall. This frequently happens, and the murder is not looked upon as a crime, but as a necessary step for the common weal. The rain-makers finish by believing in themselves. In an official report Captain Owen, now Governor of Mongalla Province, tells an anecdote of his own

dealing with a rain-making sheikh in the Uganda Protectorate (not a Dinka, of course).

"When I was serving in the Uganda Protectorate at Gondokoro in 1900 a deputation of Sheikhs visited me and asked me to imprison Sheikh Leju . . . on account of his having held up the rain. Leju lived in the hills, had had plenty of rain, and his crops were three feet high, whereas the Baris in the plains had very poor crops. It so happened that Leju came in to see me a few hours after the other Sheikhs had left. I informed him of what had happened, and told him he was an old 'fool' to pretend he could bring or stop the rain. He declared he had the power, and to prove it said rain would come that afternoon, and so it did, a very heavy downpour commencing about four o'clock, and lasting some two hours."

The crops in the Dinka districts are entirely rain crops, indeed it is looked upon as somewhat impious to irrigate by means of *shaduf*, so that it is a very serious matter if the wet weather delays. Consequently, when people displease them and the rain-makers threaten to withhold rain, great consternation is aroused. The whole thing is a mixture of bluff, fear and lies, and so is much of their supposed magic. For instance, one night, the



headman of one village goes into another with which his people are at enmity or because he wishes to wreak a private grudge upon a villager ; and ties a frog by one leg to a stick. The villagers find it in the morning, are much dismayed, and at once surmise who the offender is. Wiseacres recommend a counteracting charm ; accordingly the headman of the first village may discover a morning afterwards a headless snake secured to a stake within his *hosh*. He is afraid, and so the game goes on. The spell-makers who advise these childish pieces of ritual magic end, like the rain-makers, in themselves believing what they impose on others.

It is certain, however, that their "witch-doctors" do support their claims to extra-Dinka wisdom in curious ways. Just before Halley's Comet was due to appear, a Dinka witch-doctor named Wal, in the Aliab district, prophesied that six days after the new moon, fire or a fiery spear would come down from Heaven and destroy those guilty of having shed man's blood. Hence he went about preaching peace and urging men to friendliness with one another. He attained such fame on account of his mission, that Dinkas from

far and wide came to visit him. He gave out that he was possessed of the Supreme Spirit, Dengdit, never left his hut while the sun was up, and insisted that visitors should walk three times round his two huts the same way as the sun, before they were permitted to sit down and converse with him. He was supposed, of course, to possess miraculous powers. When seen by an English official, he appeared very friendly, and accepted a gift of tobacco. This same comet, when it appeared, very nearly produced trouble in another province, Sennar, as, contrary to Wal's view of its mission, the Arabs of that district regarded it as a call to arms in the cause of Mahdiism, for, according to tradition, most events of importance have been heralded by comets. The Government was obliged to act quickly in order to prevent a serious uprising.

In each Dinka village there is a sacred palm tree, and woe betide any one who touches it or plucks a leaf from it. Not even the most aged men, however, can tell why the palm tree is revered.

I have spoken of the Dinka code of laws, but this is somewhat misleading, as of course, none of their laws are written, and, moreover, they are

modified according to the special exigencies of each tribe or village. The administration is left entirely in the hands of the old men—age being highly respected by the Dinkas.

The Sheikh of a village is, in consequence, a constitutional ruler—that is, though in war he leads the warriors, in questions of government or justice he must defer to the advice of the old men on his council. The heads of families submit important family disputes to this council for settlement, and must conform to its decision even though it be adverse to their own interest.

I have said that in cases of moral delinquency, the guilty woman, being regarded merely as a piece of property whose value has been feloniously depreciated, is not punished, even though she have acted as temptress. The man is, in every case, looked upon as responsible and punishable. Similarly, no woman can possess property, as she is herself but a possession. Captain O'Sullivan gives a list of a male Dinka's property as follows: his wives, his unmarried sons, his unmarried daughters, the children of unmarried daughters, daughters whose marriage has been "broken,"



the children of such daughters, slaves, children of slaves, cattle, corn, and all property earned by people who are his property.

There are many somewhat curious features of Dinka justice. A man who causes the death of another of the same district, whether he kill him by accident or malice prepense, has to pay a death fine of so many head of cattle—the amount varying according to the locality. The ordinary death fine is from twenty to thirty head of cattle in case of accident, or in a case of premeditated murder a blood feud sometimes ensues if the council of elders is unable to arrange a payment of cattle. The blood feud is rarely long protracted, the offender or his family pay the fine, and peace is again observed.

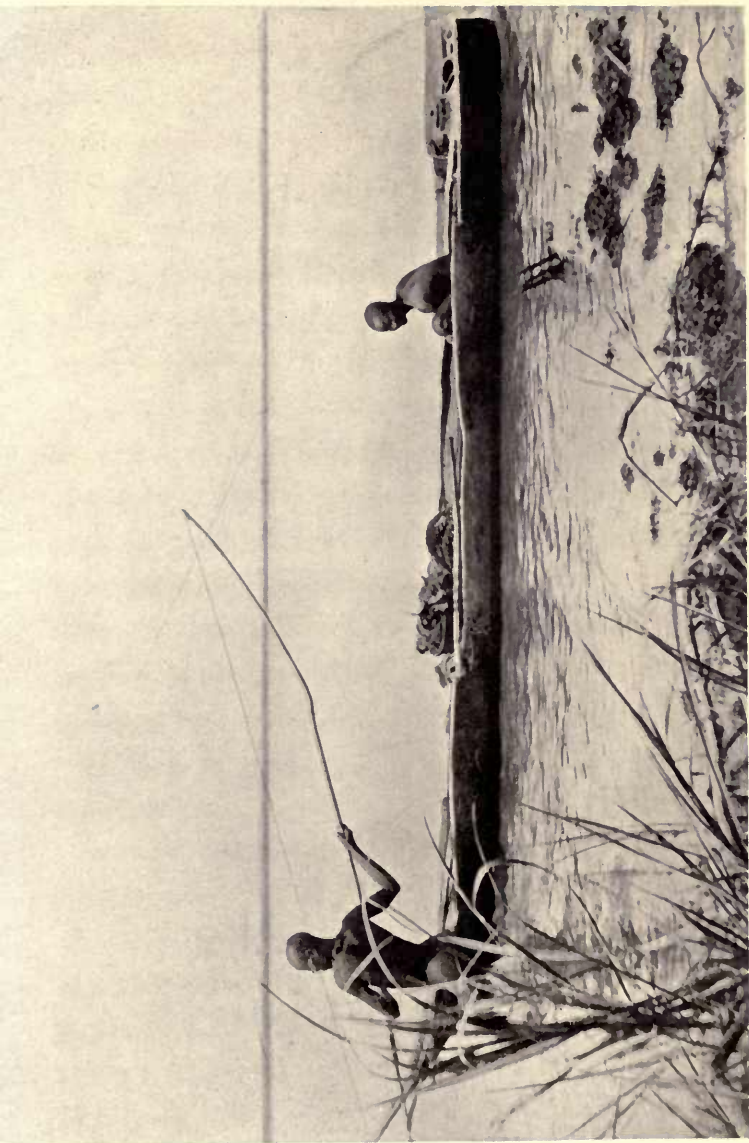
If a girl or woman be killed, the fine imposed is eight (or less) head of cattle if the man who killed her be not her owner ; and if he be her lawful owner, nothing is said, as the loss is looked upon as his. But in fact, in the case of a girl being murdered, her kinsmen often retaliate, or demand as many cattle as would have been asked for her marriage settlement ; and sometimes the matter is settled by the gift of another girl to the injured family,

any cattle due for her marriage payment coming in to them instead of to her own people.

In contradistinction to the comparative leniency of the laws against killing, crimes against women are very severely punished, more especially by the Southern tribes, seduction and similar offences being visited by death.

Theft is rare, but cattle-lifting between tribe and tribe is looked upon as a legitimate sport, and no more a breach of honest conduct than similar raiding by the Borderers in Scotland not so very long ago.

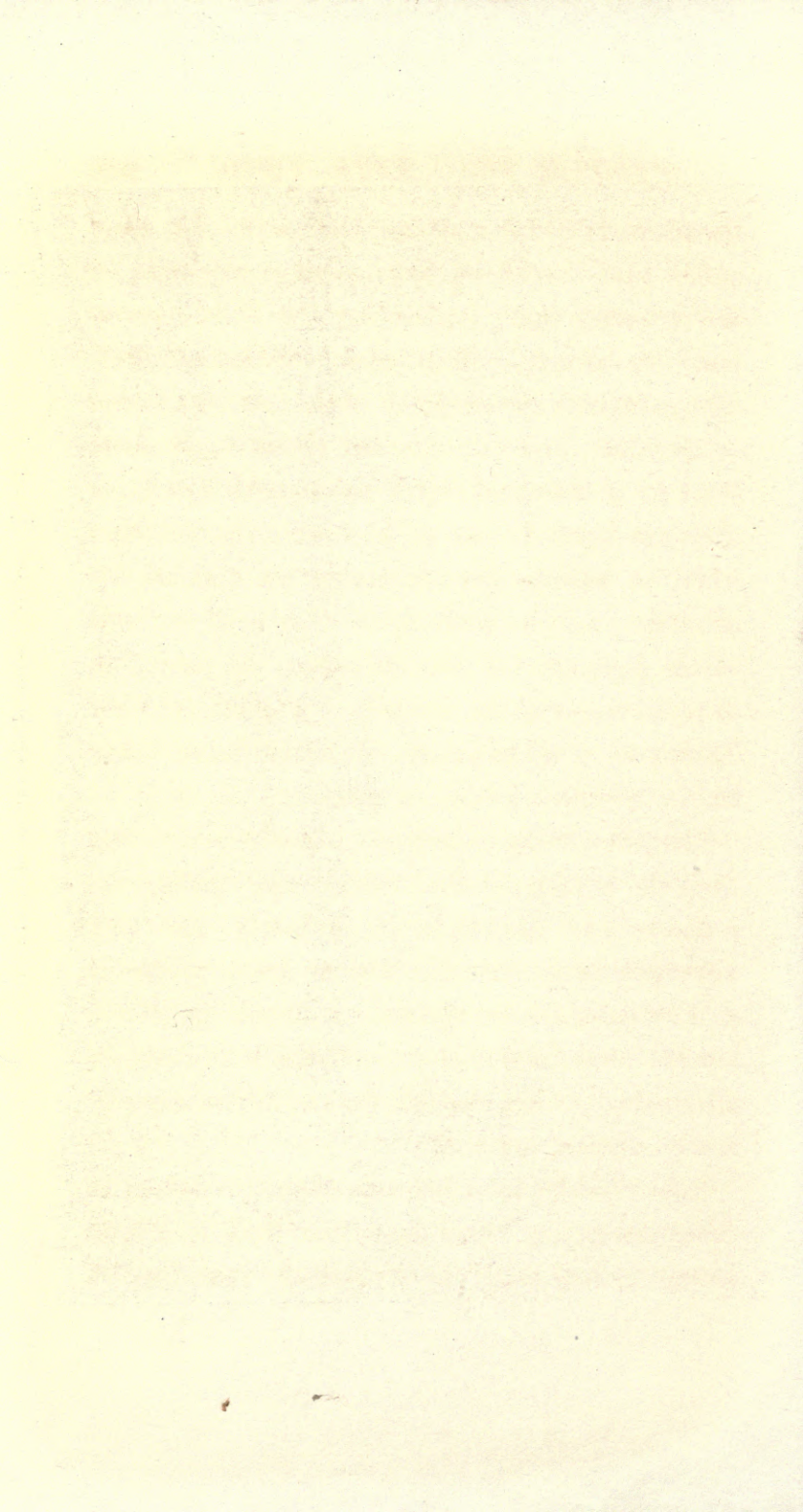
Marriage between relatives is forbidden, and any union in the forbidden degree is most stringently punished, the forbidden degree being blood relationship *of any traceable kind whatever*, no matter how distant the cousinship, on either father's or mother's side. But it is difficult to understand how the rule can be adhered to strictly in a tribal community. Should an unmarried girl bear a child by a man coming within the prohibited degree, however remotely, they are not allowed to marry, and the child becomes the property of the mother's father or guardian. Should she eventually marry some one else, the child becomes



DINKA CANOE ON THE WHITE NILE NEAR MELUT.

[S. Dunn, Esq.





the property of her husband, who pays a few more cattle than would be her marriage payment in the ordinary way, for having the child thrown into the bargain. Illegitimate children, in fact, always become the property of the mother's father or guardian, and are regarded rather as an asset than as a drawback by a subsequent suitor, as they are handed over to him with their mother when he marries her, becoming his children by adoption ; and he gladly adds more head of cattle to his payment for that privilege. In short, up to a certain age the mother of a child, whether legitimate or illegitimate, is worth more cattle than a childless woman or virgin.

The whole thing is perfectly logical when viewed from the standpoint that women and children are property just as cattle are property, the only difference being that the former are property of a more valuable description. It should be added, however, lest the outsider should think that women are treated as mere chattels, that no girl need marry a man against her will.

I could wish that I had more space to devote to these interesting tribal laws, but from this brief survey it will easily be understood that English

inspectors who attempt to interfere in tribal disputes must walk warily and take every tradition into consideration, for the root idea at the bottom of Dinka justice is totally different from that upon which our code is founded, owing to intrinsically alien conceptions of what is property.

I cannot leave the subject, however, without referring to the laws of atonement, so oddly reminiscent, as Captain O'Sullivan observes, of the practices of the Israelites (even now in vogue in Tunis), to which some Dinka customs, such as the laws regarding widows (see Deut. xxv. 5 and 6), bear close resemblance. In order to enforce their authority at some remote period, the elders of the tribe must have had recourse to this device for punishing crime. They persuaded the people that the wrath of the Divine Being, Dengdit, was caused by certain breaches of tribal law, such as a marriage between relatives, so they ordered sacrifices of a bull, cow or cattle, according to the gravity of the offence, which were solemnly killed to appease the offended Deity, at the same time a gift of cattle being made to the family injured by the culprit; in the case of a marriage between relatives the family injured would be that of the girl. Should



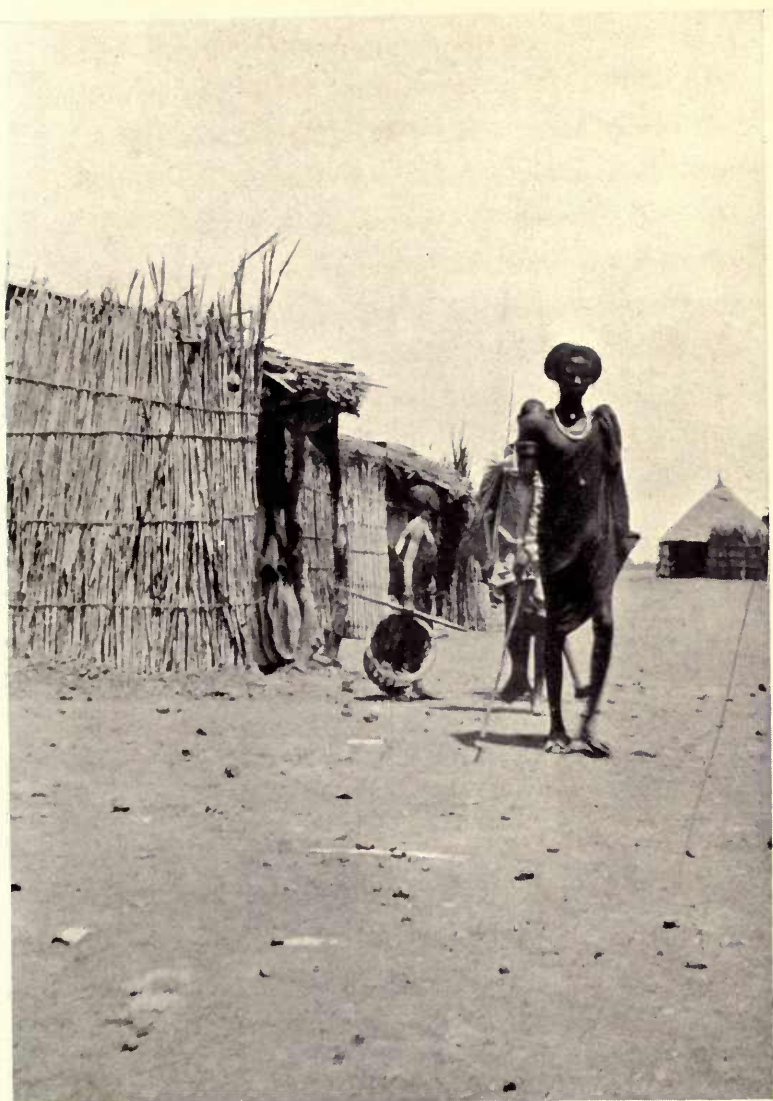
any disaster befall the culprit or his family after this sacrifice had been made, it was held that the sacrifice was not sufficient, and other animals were killed.

Dinkas, like Shilluks, pay tribute in the form of cattle or durra; and in the more northerly districts, such as Renk, are gradually growing accustomed to the novel idea that if they are too poor to own cattle and wives like their more fortunate brethren, they may be enabled to earn some by working for pay.

The Shilluks, too, are beginning to realise the value of paid labour, and in the North are learning to abandon their lordly idleness in order to improve their condition. That is, improve it from the white man's standpoint, for the morals and manners of the negroid tribes do not improve when their standard of living becomes more complex, and contact with Arabs and whites certainly has a deteriorating effect upon them in many ways. The stern morality of their primitive state becomes lax, they assume vices which were unknown to them in their savage condition, and the civilisation which teaches them to wear clothes and to use money teaches them also much which will sap gradually their vitality and self-respect.

The Shilluk is, undoubtedly, of a higher racial development than the Dinka. He is still loyal to his Mek or King (see Chapter XIII), and regards the Government as an interloper; and, though the Mek himself always bears out Government authority, is inclined to assume a haughty attitude towards foreigners. No Shilluk woman will marry willingly an Arab, or Turk as he is known among the tribes. Among the Shilluks, women occupy a very high position; certain religious ceremonies are in their hands. As with the Dinkas, offences against the honour of women are punished with the utmost severity; the extreme penalty is, however, being gradually exchanged for forfeiture of property in districts where Government influence is paramount. A Dinka man wishing to espouse a Shilluk maiden must pay more for her than he would for a Dinka bride. Perhaps the reason why the Shilluk considers himself superior is that he is more courageous, for the Dinka, with all his virtues, is somewhat of a coward. Besides, the Shilluk woman, unlike the Dinka woman, is the dictator in her household, and a case of wife-beating is rare in a Shilluk village.

Of all the tribute-paying peoples "fok," the least



IN A SHILLUK VILLAGE.





amenable is the Nuer nation. These gaunt, ash-plastered phantoms who peered at us from their ant-hills in the Sudd country are amphibious creatures and often live where no white man can follow them. Their Sheikhs, who are for the most part aged men, may listen politely to the inspectors and promise to pay tribute, but the young bloods, who have their own views on the subject, drive off their cattle into the heart of the swamps where no human being save those of their own tribe can penetrate. Generations of swamp-dwelling have taught them to pass lightly and pick their way through morasses, in which the unaccustomed plunge up to their necks in slime and water. For some time they made their boast that they were able to do without the Government, that tribute-paying was only for Shilluks and Dinkas, and not for them. Their kuguars would produce and shake their spears at the Inspector, sometimes spears would be thrown at him, and it was only by using extreme tact and exerting great patience that he and his small escort of police were able to go into the Nuer country without a loss of face. But some chiefs became so truculent that Government has been obliged to send strong administra-

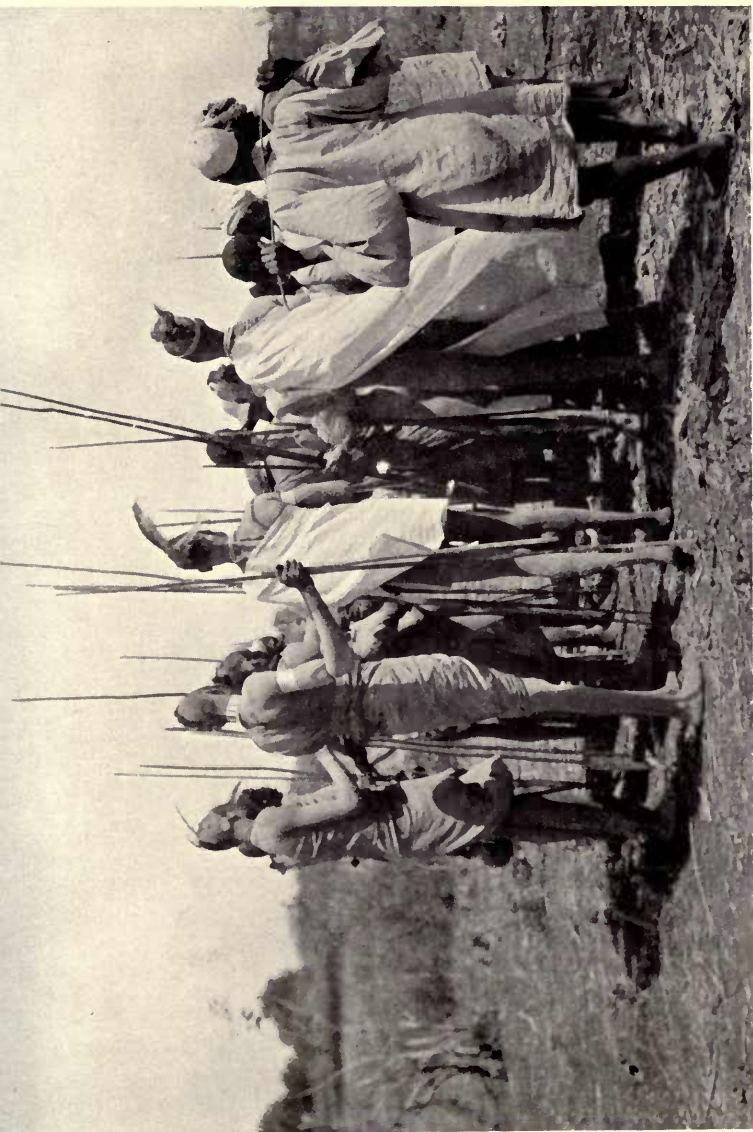
tive patrols into the Nuer districts, and even these cannot penetrate into the swampiest parts, such as the sudd country between the Bahr-el-Zeraf and the Bahr-el-Gebel, so that the Nuers who inhabit them are discreetly treated as negligible quantities.

It may be asked what right has Government to interfere with these primitive tribes. The answer of the official is that, as we profess to protect them from slave and cattle raiding, settle inter-tribal disputes, prevent acts of aggression by tribute-paying tribes, and generally shield them from disaster, we naturally expect some kind of return. For the tribes are always squabbling and raiding one another's cattle, indeed a foray is to the young warriors the very spice of life, and without Government protection the weakest would certainly go to the wall.\*

The Nuers are extremely ignorant, inflated with conceit, and low in the human scale, according to the officials, and are apt to regard leniency as

\* (From Mr. K. C. P. Struve's report in 1909). "Cases have occurred, too, where Government interference was resented by both parties, as though one had tried to stop an inoffensive game. The official's position resembles that of the referee at a football match between two Welsh colliery districts."





A GROUP OF BRAVES.



weakness. Be this as it may, one thing is certain, to expect them to work would be to look for figs on a thistle. The possession of cattle is, to the Nuer or Dinka, the main object of life. He has no other needs. What use, therefore, are the white man and the goods he may offer? For food this son of simplicity has the durra which is watered by the rain, and the fish which he spears in the river, supplemented by hippo or other meat when Allah or Dengdit, or the tribal Equivalent, sends it. Other necessities he has not. Money means nothing to him; a spear, when once purchased; will last a lifetime. Clothes are thought mere vanity, and copper bracelets are sufficient for his adornment: for amusement he is dependent upon no one. Why should he work?

Of course the answer to this is that as civilisation lays insidious hands on these savages, their needs, at present so grandly few, will multiply; their life, now so simple, will become complex. The thin end of the wedge is already inserted. The Nuers and Dinkas know that for a good tusk of elephant ivory they may expect to receive from ten to a score of cattle, and they are proud of their herds. Other things will gradually follow. The



women will play Eve to the trading tempter. As soon as the women clamour for silver bracelets instead of brass bangles, the magnificent idlers their husbands will have to work for money to buy them or commodities to offer in exchange for them. Missionaries prepare the way for the trader. Education creates other needs and desires ; the Serpent will offer the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and these naked Adams will begin to wear clothes, incidentally needing the wherewithal to pay for them. Once clothed, the desire of luxury will creep in, they will covet strange foods, better housing ; and, so closely does history repeat itself, they will be driven from a state of idleness and simplicity in the Garden of Eden of their savagery, to toil, to bear the burden of civilisation, to begin that weary race towards complexity which ends—in the long run—in decadence. Poor savage ! I am glad that I saw him in the dignity of barbarism ! For when, to return to the Dinka legend, Dengdit showers upon Abungdit's black son the gifts which He has bestowed upon his white brother, He will gradually withdraw that greatest gift of all, contentment.

## CHAPTER XX

### BAGGARAS AND NUBAS

I HAVE already written of the fights between the Baggaras of the plains and the Nubas in the hills in Kordofan, and as I had the opportunity of talking with several officials who had spent long periods in that part of the Sudan, it has occurred to me that what I heard might well be embodied in a separate chapter, for, of all the peoples that inhabit the Sudan, these tribes are perhaps the most interesting. The Baggaras formed the flower of the Dervish army—it was the prostrate Baggara horsemen who strewed the desert at the battle of Omdurman; and just as the Baggaras are the haughtiest and most vigorous Arabs in the Sudan, the Nubas are, in many ways, the most interesting and attractive of the negroid tribes. Both dwell in Kordofan, there is a bitter feud between them, both are courageous,

both have lovable qualities. I never met an official whose lot had been cast in Kordofan who did not speak of both Baggaras and Nubas with enthusiasm.

It is necessary, perhaps, to give a brief historical review of the course of events which have brought these two tribes together.

In early times, the North of the Sudan was Christian, as is amply proved by the discovery of Christian inscriptions and emblems in excavations at Meroe and elsewhere. The Nubas were then inhabiting the country west of the Nile, and were a prosperous pastoral tribe. (It is probable that the Nubians were originally a mixture of this ancient tribe of Nubas and Egyptians.) The rich plains of Southern Kordofan were held by them after the annexation of the Sudan by the Moslems in 1275, and during the dynasty of the Fungs, who had their capital at Sennaar. Bit by bit the Arabs began to establish themselves in the Sudan, taking advantage of intertribal disputes, and marrying into the negroid peoples amongst whom they had settled. They soon became the ruling influence in the Sennaar kingdom, though the Fungs continued to reign and had conquered from the Blue Nile



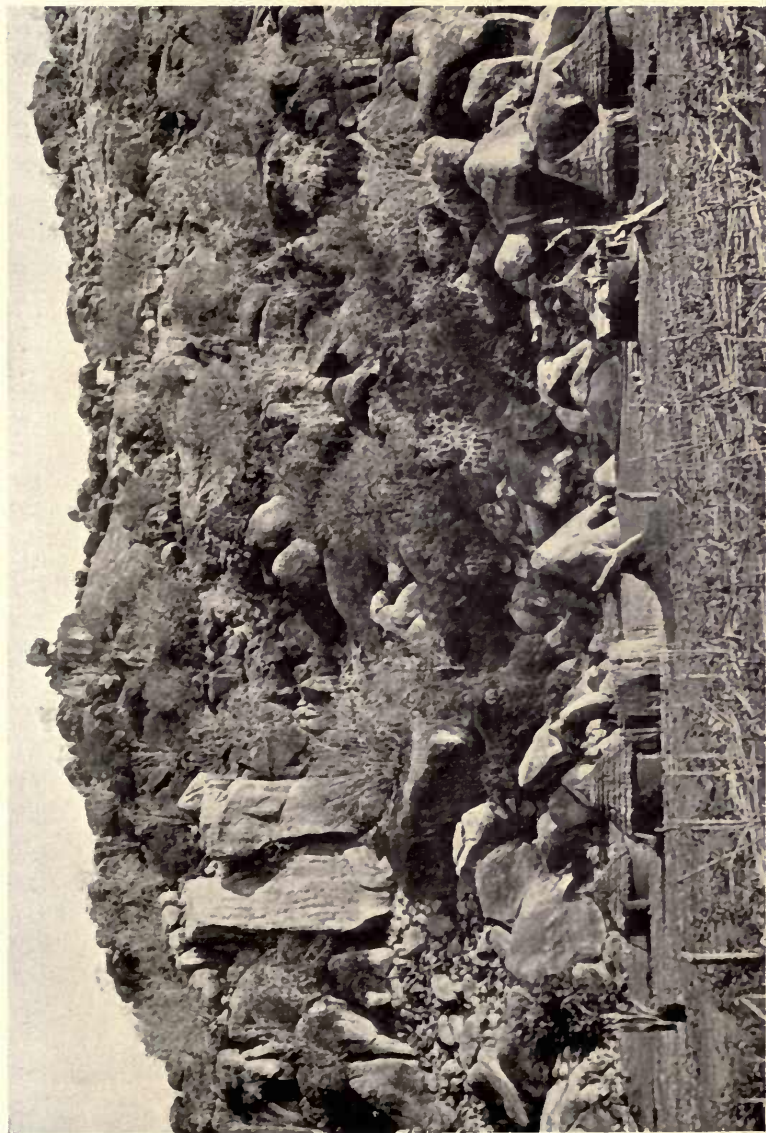
to the Abyssinian frontier and North as far as the Atbara. In the latter years of the eighteenth century the Fungs began to lose power, and the disorganisation of their rule encouraged Mohammed Ali to send an invading force up into the Sudan. In 1820 the first expedition pushed up the White Nile and into Kordofan, its leaders being inflamed by the hope of enriching themselves from Sudani gold-mines and by the capture of slaves.

But meanwhile, the existence of the Nubas had been threatened from elsewhere. They had, as I have said, originally dwelt in the grassy plains of Southern Kordofan; but the nomad Baggara Arabs, filtering in from the West, coveted the country for their flocks and herds, and being a powerful and warlike tribe, drove the peaceful and pastoral Nubas inch by inch into their hills. More than that, they captured the unprotected Nubas, who were and are a finely-built race, and kept them as slaves or sold them to Egyptian dealers. This was the state of things when the Egyptians took over the Sudan, and the Egyptian Government left the matter there. The slave-raiding continued; the unfortunate Nubas were

driven more and more into their hills or gebels, from which they would descend from time to time on the Baggaras in the plains for reprisals, taking their revenge where they could. Hill life is not conducive to tribal unity, and the Nubas speak many languages, all varying very widely. The country became divided up, each sub-tribe being apportioned a district ; and these Nuba districts were not only constantly protecting themselves against the Baggaras, but also against the aggressions and raids of their Nuba neighbours. Gebel made war on gebel, and sub-tribe on sub-tribe.

The Nubas, once so prosperous, having been ousted from the plains, were now poor. They terraced their hills, it is true, and sowed grain on the rocky ledges, but this did not suffice. They were often driven to sell their children into slavery in exchange for durra to sustain life.

The gebels were practically impregnable, and though the Egyptian Government succeeded in attacks on small gebels, and in forcing a few to pay tribute, they contented themselves for the most part with leaving the Baggaras masters of the situation, and in obliging them in return to pay heavy tribute.



NUBA COUNTRY, EMIRA HILLS.

[Morkig.]





During Dervish times, the Nubas proved by no means tractable to Dervish rule, and were treacherously and cruelly treated, as is graphically described in Slatin Pasha's "Fire and Sword in the Sudan" and in Father Ohrwalder's account of his captivity. But during this period, the poor but gallant Nubas gradually armed themselves, buying the rifles captured by the Dervishes from the ill-fated Hicks expedition, from the slave-dealers, who received slaves in exchange, and taught the Nubas how to use the fire-arms, unknowing that by so doing they were themselves giving the Nubas the means to protect themselves from slave-raiders.

When the Anglo-Egyptian Government took possession, their first measure in Kordofan was to stop the slave-raiding as far as possible, their second to pacify the Nubas, who were now armed, mistrustful of every foreigner, and secure in the belief that in the fastnesses of their hills they were absolutely safe. At first the headmen of the gebels refused to visit any Government station, but their confidence was gradually gained, and they are now returning to agriculture; and the Arabs, instead of raiding, carry Nuba produce on their bulls to the souks of the nearest towns.

As an illustration of the methods employed by Government officials in dealing with the Nubas, I must relate a story told me by an ex-official. He was going through the Nuba country with a small armed patrol in order to hear complaints and settle disputes between rival gebels—for the Government gets its opportunity for asserting its authority and establishing its claims when a single native or a village applies to it for the settlement of a grievance. It is gradually being understood that the English do their best to judge between person and person, village and village, tribe and tribe, with impartiality; and the Open Sesame of the inspector among tribes that are recalcitrant to authority is the cry of "Nahna mazulmin" or "Ana mazloun," of those who think themselves in need of protection or vindication.

As among the Dinkas, in the case of killing, whether of man or woman or child or beast, compensation can be demanded by the injured people in the form of so much cattle. The fixed rate of compensation, or blood money, among the Nubas is seven head of cattle for a man, four head for a woman, and three for a horse. Therefore, when the Government acts as arbitrator,



in case of a quarrel between gebel and gebel where blood has been shed, the whole thing must be counted out in cattle.

In the case to which I refer, one gebel, which I will call A., had had a quarrel with a neighbouring gebel B. Moreover, Arabs complained that men from Gebel A. had driven off their cattle. It was impossible to say without inquiry whether Gebel A. was entirely wrong. It was quite possible that the Arabs had fully deserved to lose some of their cattle. So the little expedition went to see. The first night they camped under Gebel B., and the Arabs came in to make their formal complaint. Accordingly, a messenger was dispatched to Gebel A. asking them to send responsible men to meet the Government representatives, so that the matter could be judged. The headman, a kugur, of Gebel A. sent a messenger to say that he could not come.

“Very well,” said the Government envoy, “we will go to your place,” and some of the Government party left the camp and set off for Gebel A., three miles away, leaving the main party at Gebel B. But the Nubas of Gebel A. were afraid, and refused to come down when messengers were sent to them.

Matters had reached a deadlock therefore until one of the English officials, a subordinate, was given permission to go and see what he could do single-handed towards persuading Gebel A. that nothing more than justice was intended. He rode up to the foot of the gebel, attended only by one policeman, dismounted and sat down. When some Nubas came along, he chatted to them in a friendly way, in order that they might see that he had come on a peaceable mission. Finally the headman approached, surrounded by an escort of about a hundred men, bearing rifles. They all sat down, Mr. X. and the headman in the centre of a circle of warriors. It was easy to see that the headman regarded his presence with the utmost suspicion. He was trembling with fright, although Mr. X. was really entirely at his mercy. However, the Englishman began to explain that the reason why he and his comrades had come was to serve the interests of peace, and not of war. The Government, he said, had the welfare of the tribes at heart, they wished to protect the weak, to see the tribes on friendly terms with one another, and to deal out justice. Complaints had been made, but they had heard only one side. Let the

headman, therefore, come in to the Government, that he might give his side of the case, and a just judgment should be given, and arbitration made.

But the headman would not listen to him. "This," he said, "was the old Dervish plan, that when the headman of a gebel came into their camp after their fair promises, he was killed, and then the Dervishes took the hill while all was in confusion."

"Did the Dervishes send an important Emir into the midst of you as a token of good faith? Here am I, come into the midst of you, alone, to show you that no treachery is intended."

But the terror of the old days had sunk deep. "When the Dervishes came," said the headman, "they camped where you have encamped, below the gebel of our enemies. How do I know that you are not like the Dervishes? You are friendly with our enemies (of Gebel B.): how shall I know that you are not in league with them against us?"

"I am in your power. If you think that I am deceiving, it is open to you to kill me. If we meant to betray you, I should not have come here to put myself at your mercy."



The headman thought. Then he said, " You say you have come on a peaceful mission. Why have you brought troops with you ? "

" We have brought troops to chastise the unruly and punish those who will not obey us."

All this conversation was carried on by means of an interpreter, and as the headman really seemed impressed, Mr. X. began to imagine that he was persuaded. But, instead, they all jumped up and began arguing most violently among themselves. When one man had finished haranguing the rest, a second began, and so it went on for some time, until Mr. X., who was growing hungry, took out a biscuit and began to eat, at the same time offering the headman a piece of it.

He refused, but explained politely, through the interpreter, that he was a priest (*kugur*), and that priests never eat in public. At last he turned to Mr. X., and with an obvious air of honesty, said to him that his people advised him not to go, for there was a legend in their tribe that the first priest to go into land occupied by a foreign power must die.

Mr. X. was at a loss as to what to say to this, but the headman continued, " If you can persuade

those who sent you to camp on our hill instead of on the gebel of our enemies, we will come and discuss the matter as you wish."

The Englishman replied that he would do his best to induce them to do so, on the condition that four of the most important men would accompany him as hostages back to the camp for the night.

The headman agreed readily, and added that he would also send some sheep as a present. He picked out the men from the crowd of warriors around them, and the four braves looked somewhat crestfallen as they answered the summons, nevertheless they came forward, and returned with Mr. X.

It was settled to move the camp on the next day as the headman had requested, but during the intervening night the four hostages endeavoured to run away. When three of them were re-captured, it transpired that the malicious Arabs had told them that they were to be killed. One man escaped, and long afterwards, when Mr. X. was in that part of the country, sent him a present of honey with the message that he regarded him as a brother.

So the affair ended: the dispute was settled

to the contentment of every one ; and through the tact of the British official, an incident that might have resulted in bloodshed became a means of establishing friendly relations with a hitherto recalcitrant gebel. I have related this incident at such length because it is very typical of the work done, not only in Dar Nuba but throughout the Sudan.\*

The religion of the Nuba resembles that of the Dinka in that it is monotheistic, the Supreme Spirit being named Bail. This Deity dwells above the Earth, is almighty and beneficent ; giving and taking away life, and ordering the course of events in Earth and Heaven. There is a certain resemblance to the Dinka legend too about the Nuba account of the first man and woman, Adam and Hawa, for like Abungdit, Hawa, the Nuba Eve, hid her black offspring from their father. Adam and Hawa had seven brown-skinned children and seven black, six of the black being boys and one a girl. Adam wished to shave the heads of his children, but Hawa concealed her black sons and daughter. According to the interesting notes which a former Government inspector handed

\* See also Chapter XIII.



me,\* the eldest black son, Tinhor, offended his father by laughing at him (is this a distant relation to the story of Noah and his sons?) and was punished by the decree that the black children must be slaves to the brown. Later, the black children escaped and founded the black races in other lands. It is curious that in both this story and the Dinka legend there is the same tacit, almost pathetic, acknowledgment of the racial inferiority of the black man, and the recognition that his lot is different from that of his fairer brother.

The Deity Bail, according to my informant, entrusts the guidance of men's affairs and destinies to lesser spirits—the Arros. Each community, district, or village has its own Arro, or tutelary deity, and its own priests. The Arros were chosen by Bail as his lieutenants from the departed spirits of the first inhabitants. A large village or gebel may have several Arros, and may include female Arros, the number of the latter never being increased. These Arros govern the community, and deal out happiness and prosperity or sickness and

\* I believe that these notes were, or are to be, published by the journal of an Anthropological Society. If so, my apologies for reprinting such interesting information.

misfortune, acting as a body with a Chief or Sultan Arro as president. They also concern themselves with the well-being of the community in the next world. The Arros obtain permission of Bail before they punish or reward for good or bad actions, through the Sultan Arro. In fact, the Arros resemble the patron saints of the Italian peasant, who mediate between the Supreme Being and the mortal.

This hagiocracy, or board of saints, is represented again by priests or priestesses, each Arro having his or her representative or pontiff. The kugurs are greatly revered by the people, who accredit them with supernatural gifts. When a kugur dies, his place is filled by the Arro whose representative he is, and the Arro enters the body of a person whom he has chosen as the dead kugur's successor, causing him to fall down in a trance, and speaks to the people through his mouth, after summoning them by weird screams. The people are then exhorted by the Arro to obey the new kugur; the man recovers from his trance and is recognised as filling a sacred office from that day forth. Sometimes impostors assume the trance, as, for instance, some years ago, when a man simulated a trance

and announced that he had been chosen to replace the chief kugur, who was still living. Some believed him, others did not, and the believers brought him the usual offerings to bring the rains. The original kugur said that no rain should fall until the impostor was deposed. The rainy season drew near, and the village was in the utmost excitement as to which would be proved to have the real inspiration. But though the season had come, no rains fell. Day after day went by, the sky remained cloudless, and the earth parched. Weeks passed by, still there was no drop of the precious rain upon which the whole annual supply of food would depend. At last, terrified for their crops, the apostates returned, and the people made their gifts to the old kugur. Immediately, the rain fell. The goods of the pretender were seized by the people and given to the old kugur.

The trances are induced by starvation, drink, and meditation. When the kugur admonishes or preaches to his people, he throws himself into a trance; the Arro then avails himself of the kugur's body, and speaks through his mouth.

In appearance the kugurs are usually ascetic, spare and melancholy, as becomes their vocation.



It is seldom, says my informant, that one meets a smiling or chubby kugur. They wear iron bracelets on their arms, and rings on their fingers and toes. Their staff of office is a wand or long-handled axe, with iron rings round the handle; and they smoke pipes with long be-ringed stems. When one kugur meets another, he clasps his shoulders, hands and knees. The layman offers his shoulder or upper arm to a kugur when he meets one, so that it may be touched by the kugur's right hand, while the kugur, by way of blessing, spits on the Nuba's chest. The kugur, as seen in the story I have related, does not eat in public, and when at a public feast, touches the food to bless it. Very often they will not eat away from their own hills. They profess to work cures by spitting on the sick person.

The Nubas do not pray for themselves, the kugur intercedes for them, therefore it is to him that they apply if they have a petition concerning worldly affairs. Sin is punished during a man's lifetime, and so there is no punishment to follow in a future life. Murder and theft are the worst sins, and unless restitution be made, the guilty may expect bad luck to follow them. (This is

the same principle as the Sacrifice of Atonement of the Dinkas.) Murder can be expiated by the killing of the murderer by the murdered man's relatives, or, supposing the murderer to have fled, by the payment of seven head of cattle by his relatives, the confiscation of his property, and the destruction of his house and belongings by fire. His grain is confiscated and given to the Mek if the latter be not related to the dead man. If he be, the grain is given to strangers or destroyed. When once atonement has been made in these ways, the guilty man can return to his village and start life again. It is not murder to kill a man belonging to a hostile gebel, nor is it theft to raid his cattle.

When a man has had his property stolen he goes to the kugur, with gifts, asking him to discover the stolen article or animal. The kugur then assembles the people together, and solemnly curses the thief, threatening him with dire calamities if the stolen goods be not delivered up (like the prelate in the "Jackdaw of Rheims"). A guilty conscience and fear combined will generally lead the robber to return what he has stolen, putting it by stealth outside the kugur's house.

The women are as a rule virtuous, but should a woman deceive her husband, he may take the law into his hands and kill her lover. Tale-bearing and scandal are, however, looked upon with contempt, and a man who cannot take care of his own wife with scorn and pity. An Englishman once asked an old Nuba what he would do if he found that his wife was unfaithful to him. He replied that, when he was young, if he had discovered her infidelity to be beyond all doubt, he should have killed her lover, "but now," he concluded, "I should beat her and chase him away." "Why so?" asked the Englishman. "Because when one has reached my age, one knows that no woman is worth the life of a man." The moral crimes are, contrary to Dinka social custom, looked upon as venial. A Nuba may marry as many wives as he likes.

The Nuba conception of the future life is more generous than the Christian, in that a man expects to meet his faithful dog, his goat, his horse and his cattle in the next world as well as his kindred. He expects to live with his wives as on earth, but no children are born. Each community lives happily a life similar to that they have led on



earth, under the government of the Arro, and no strife or discord mar this Heavenly existence.

The inhabitants of Southern Dar Nuba do not trouble their heads much with religion, and as far south as Talodi there are no kugurs, only female rain-makers or medicine women. They believe the Supreme Being to be female, because productive (cf. the Kabbala). These women, or priestesses, "scry" by means of pouring grease into a gourd of water, and discover thieves by this form of crystal-gazing. Marriages are very free and easy in the South, and divorces to be had without the least difficulty.

The Northern Nubas have a ceremony corresponding to baptism. The child to be named is brought when it is a fortnight old to the chief kugur, who kills a chicken and, dipping it into a bowl of water, sprinkles the child and its relatives with it. Then he takes the child into his Arro's house or hut, spits on it and pronounces a name over it which has been chosen by its parents.

The marriage customs are very interesting. The usual price to pay for a bride is about eight head of cattle. On payment of two, the bridegroom can claim his bride. She does not live in his hut, but

remains under her mother's roof until her first baby is born. Then he completes half the payment, and takes her into his own house. The remaining half of the marriage payment is made when the children of the marriage are grown up, out of the cattle paid for married daughters or from earnings of the sons. Should the couple be childless, half the agreed cattle are returned. Cousins may not marry.

The Nubas are governed by Meks, or Kings, aided by a council of old men, including kugurs, but sometimes the kugur is the only ruler. As with the Dinkas, old age is highly respected.

Of the Baggaras I have written in a former chapter (See Chapter XI). They live in moving villages, and are rich in flocks and herds, living a simple pastoral life similar to that led by Abraham and his tribe centuries ago. The Baggara girls are very comely, do not veil, and seldom trouble to cover the upper part of the body. They are free of restraint, and even young maidens ride about unprotected on their bulls. One inspector told me that he used to derive much useful information from these women, who are far more communicative than the men, and liked to call on him, to

sit and joke with him in his tent and discuss the local news of the day. They dress their hair in many plaits.\*

A Baggara wedding is accompanied by curious customs which are somewhat reminiscent of marriage by capture. The bride-to-be goes out early in the morning accompanied by a girl friend, and hides—either in the house of a neighbour or in the bush. The bridegroom rides to a little distance outside the village with his friends, accompanied by a following of women, who utter the shrill joy-cries called *zagharit*, sometimes going as far as to the next village. Then they return, and a big meal is prepared by the older women, while the young maidens, stripped to the waist, and holding the long ends of their silk firkas or sashes in front of them and waving them in time to the music, form in a line, and move round and round a centre, only in the opposite direction to the hand

\* The slave women think the long hair of the freed woman a token that she is not pious. For when, in the beginning of the world, all things woke in the long grass and, carrying offerings, went to Allah to receive the breath of life, the long-haired woman carried a basket of durra on her head like the short-haired, but it was only half full. On the other hand, the long-haired women despise those whose hair is crisp and short.



of a clock, singing appropriate songs. In the centre musicians beat the drums, and the young men run behind and fire rifles over the girls' heads into the air, sometimes forming part of an outer rim, like the rim to the spokes of a wheel.

Later, comes the marriage feast and the "finding of the bride," the bridegroom having been previously apprised in secret where she is. During the festivities it is not supposed to be etiquette for the bridegroom to eat very much. The ceremonies finish by the bridegroom leading the bride to the newly built hut or tent, around which there are dances and beating of drums for some time afterwards.



[S. Dunn, Esq.]

SUDANESE WOMAN MAKING BREAD IN THE BAHR-EL-GHAZAL.





## CHAPTER XXI

### SIMPLICITY AND THE SMILE SUPERIOR

BES, the god of laughter whose squat little figure is to be found so often amongst the symbolic amulets placed in Egyptian tombs, was of Sudanese origin. And very appropriately, for the black man is on the whole a light-hearted person, who laughs easily. But he is too simple to understand humour in the European sense of the word, and it is this very simplicity which often presents a humorous side to the foreigner. The humour of the negroid is too crude for the civilised palate. Like the good-tempered fellow that he is, he is always ready with a smile that shows his white teeth, but he can see the laughable in situations or stories more Rabelaisian than Rabelais, more Boccaccian than Boccaccio. Though in the main kind-hearted, like some unimagined child, he can see exquisite funniness in the sufferings of

some poor creature, and what to a European would seem brutal will seem to him supremely amusing.

Some one defined humour as a sense of disproportion. It is usually a consciousness of superiority. The man who laughs is the man who is secure in superior information, wisdom, wit or sophistry. The naïveté of the Sudani supplies plenty of food for this kind of laughter.

For instance, there is the story of the agricultural show at a village on the Blue Nile, where an exhibitor walked away with his bull in high dudgeon when he was awarded the first prize. When questioned, he said that his bull was worth far more than that ! A similar innocence was recently displayed by a Sudani in Khartoum whose son was ill. He met an English acquaintance, who inquired after the invalid. The Sudani replied that one of his friends had just given him a bottle of medicine which he hoped would cure the lad. " But your friend's illness may not be the same as your son's ; you had better take your son to the hospital and let them prescribe for him." " Oh," replied the man, " but the medicine came from the hospital, so it must be all right ! "

Certain stories of this kind have become regular

club chestnuts, as, for example, the history of the telegraph clerk in an outlying district of the White Nile who, finding the desolation upon his nerves, telegraphed to head-quarters, "Cannot stay here, am in danger of life, am surrounded by lions, elephants and wolves." The hard-hearted operator at the other end wired back, "There are no wolves in the Sudan." He received a second wire: "Referring my wire 16th cancel wolves."

At distant stations, if a government official dies, some one is usually sent to make an inquiry. Accordingly, a wire was dispatched by a clerk at a distant station to the authorities, "Station-master dead; wire instructions." The authorities contented themselves with telegraphing back, "Ascertain if dead; and if so bury." After a short while an answer came. "Have ascertained dead by hitting on head with fishplate; have buried."

But the most amusing form of simplicity is, perhaps, the Sudanese equivalent of *babu* English in letters. A certain government official received the following letter from a former employé, the object of which appears at the end. The spelling is unaltered:



“ — Esq.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ KHARTOUM, 29/xi/1910.

“ Thanks to God the father of fatherless to whom I should worship day and night morning and evening—at sunset and sunrise, repeating the hottest prayers at dead of night for the great and heavy obligations He owed me and saved me from leading astray and brought me out of darkness to light and blessed me by the honour and acquaintance and fortune of serving under you—Your person that is ornamented with high virtues and embellished with pearls of excellent characters and seasoned with the nicest graces and humanity.

“ I weep for these excellent days and valuable time I have had spent with you and hope it will come back to me. How much I would express the utmost desire and extreme anxiety of my having the chance to be again with you—Each individual had a happy time that goes off and remains in his memory—so any time be with the last period I passed with you I do not forget the fruitful seeds of kind treatment fraternal and mutual respects, that it was not direct between a Junior and Senior as the case should be, which

had been flourishingly sown by your esteemed hand rapidly grown out of croptime and reaped very quick with the produce of golden fruits of love and hearted regards and warm respectful towards you. It was, Sir, the yield of land that was ploughed with lively feelings and tender sympathy.

“ They say, reputation of great men’s lives lives after them but goods often entered with their bones. But exceptionally your goods will remain to-day and to-morrow, for ever and even for any time that come.

“ I, Sir, have nothing more to show my loyal submission and gratitude except by my soal and heart which were represented here on paper and ink.

“ Before closing my letter like to let you know a piece of material change which is based on the fact that our Department has been divided into two parts, i.e. the Agricultural has been separated from Lands—and am was taken on the latter (Lands) —This new position gives me a great satisfaction and it really due through your valuable recommendations and excellent reports previously submitted in my favour to late Director Mr. —.

“ I think, Sir, it would be a much more trouble if it would be convenient in soliciting you to send a word to your friend Mr. —— my actual Chief. I would be glad if you would kindly do it please. Anyhow I have the full hopes in knowing that you will favour me with such request.

“ My best regards to your noblesels,

“ Yours humble and faithful,

“ —————,

“ Lands Department.”

Another gem of this order was given me by a judge in Khartoum, who received the letter which I append.

“ SIR,

“ I beg to bring to your notice the following——

“ I am a merchant by trade and has been such, honest and reliable, for twenty years, and the 33 bills attached partially prove my statement.

“ It is evident that a merchant is not invariably on the side to gain but in the most of circumstances, perhaps, loss is more or less indispensable ; in the case of loss, should the merchant find no



financial supporter, failure is apt. This is the case that surrounds me now. I could not find assistance or support of any sort from my dealers or merchant comrades at my present juncture. I have dealt with these merchants and exchanged business for some long time without the least touch of honesty on my part.

“Backwardness in market which was general on all merchants and loss sustained in my contract for the supply of bread to the students of Omdurman School have in the years 1908 and 1909 caused me to suffer considerably financially. Such facts are well known to all my creditors.

“On the other hand merchants with whom I deal have put me to suffer too in a bad way of business. They take their bills signed from me and lodge them in the Bank and when the time of payment is due I find it most necessary to refund or interests are to be added to the debt, making it worse and worse. It would then be wiser to dispose of the goods by sale with lower prices to help pay off the bills that become due, thinking that I may have some ample time, later on, to make good the loss already sustained. Not only this kind of treatment but they have withheld their

business hence this result which I do not in any way like.

“One should not like for himself but honesty and truth. You will kindly notice that I not encouraged to act in this way until I tried all possibly supposed fruitful efforts but in vain.

“Under these circumstances I hope as I beg from our just lawyers to consider the case to my favour so that my future may not be injured being a supporter of a family of 16 souls.

“I have the honour to be

“Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“Sgd. ———.”

An English lawyer practising in Khartoum told me that he once received a letter addressed in English to “the Notorious Solicitor”; a dictionary translation of an ordinary honorific in Arabic.

After all, why should one smile? Without doubt, the Englishman as he stumbles along in Arabic makes infinitely funnier mistakes, though the native preserves absolute gravity. And yet, small things like these tickle the Englishman’s ribs, and fit into his conception of the country,

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relieve the *ennui* of routine and enliven many a wearisome business. They certainly enter into the picture which one carries away from the Sudan when one leaves it, do these tales of simplicity. May this be my excuse for introducing so puerile a chapter.

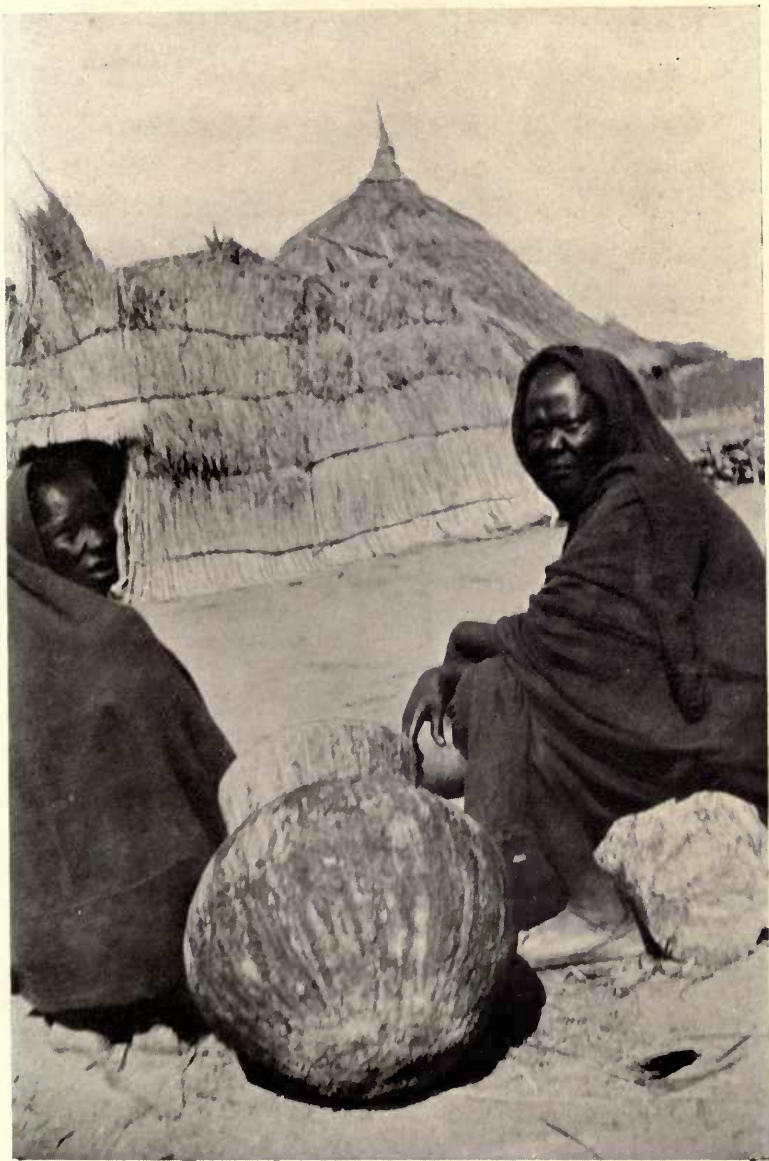


## CHAPTER XXII

### THE OUTLOOK

A HEALTHY baby puts on weight very slowly, but regularly. It is not entirely a matter for congratulation if its weight goes up with a jump, in fact it may be as harmful to the child as a decrease. So it is with a country. It should gain in prosperity, but not by leaps and bounds. Such leaps are usually due to false optimism, to speculation and bogus values, and, like all feverish impulses forward, are followed by dangerous relapses. Hence Lord Kitchener, when he went up to open the railway to El Obeid, while he registered his satisfaction at the progress already made, laid stress again and again on the admonition "steady."

The Sudan has been in the hands of the Anglo-Egyptian Government for twelve years. What was its financial position when taken over, and what is it now?



VILLAGE SCENE, WHITE NILE.





It had no position at all then. It was stricken by famine and disease, depopulated, uncultivated, devastated. Egypt came to the rescue. She provided certain sums annually, and also grants for various purposes, that something might be made out of the ruin. She has continued her annual grant ever since—in fact, she has found all the money for the administration of the Sudan, has built her railways, met the yearly deficits, and paid the expenses of conquest. It is true that that sum has dwindled down to a hundred and sixty-three thousand per annum when the amount paid back by the Sudan Government for the partial maintenance of the Egyptian army in the Sudan is deducted, but that is, after all, no inconsiderable sum. In fact, at first sight it would seem that the partnership was a very unequal one, Great Britain merely using the Egyptian purse and giving her no more real voice in the ruling of the purchase than the late Empress Dowager of China gave her colourless co-regent. It must, however, be taken into account that Great Britain, if she has not financed the Sudan, has given it of her best in the matter of administration, and that the conquest of the Sudan was at first, professedly, merely

undertaken in order to preserve the peace of the frontier, and to ensure to Egypt her water supply. It was, in fact, insurance on a large scale, not an investment promising immediate profit. Its primary objects have already been attained. That the Sudan will, eventually, not only cease to be a financial burden on its Northern sister-country, but become a self-supporting concern, can only be a matter of time. Slowly and surely the annual grant is decreasing. In 1899 the subvention in aid of the civil expenditure of the Sudan was £E149,000 more than in 1912.

Moreover, the trade returns have certainly been satisfactory. Before the Dervishes harried the land, the Sudan was an agricultural and pastoral country. It is becoming so again—slowly. It should be the larder of Egypt. Egypt is already drawing on the Sudan instead of upon foreign countries as formerly, for her supplies of cattle, durra and wheat. Every year over twenty thousand bales of cotton are exported; Kordofan yields gum and sesame; from the swamps and thickets of the South come precious tusks of ivory; from the Bahr-el-Ghazal, wild gum; and all these products and others find their market in

Europe. In short, the trade returns, like the revenue, have been steadily mounting.

But that fact need give rise to no hysterical pride when one considers the vast possibilities of the country and how small is this result compared with what it might be were the country properly developed. The cotton cultivation is but experimental so far, though cotton has been grown for years. The rubber, though favourably reported upon, is less than experimental; that is to say, there is little, if any, cultivation of it in the Sudan yet, though a concession has been granted for the collection of the wild rubber in the South. There are other possibilities, almost as wide, waiting solely for enterprise and capital, capital above all.

The Sudan is a vast untilled garden. Sir William Willcocks recently pointed out that if five million were expended on reservoirs, training works and power stations in the Sudd region alone, at present so useless and pernicious a district, the result would prove "as profitable as a gold mine and as permanent as water power depending on the melting snows of the Alps."

The representative of the British Cotton-Growing



Association who visited the Sudan this spring with the idea of seeing what its possibilities as a cotton-growing country were, reported that in the Gezira, the "island" between the two Niles, there is a huge country containing at least five million acres of first-class cotton soil, a country as large as the Egyptian Delta; not to mention the cotton that might be grown as rain-crops farther South, or at Tokar and Kassala, where floods from the Abyssinian mountains water the soil annually, leaving a rich deposit. But for this purpose, irrigation, railways, and commercial development would be necessary, entailing an initial expenditure of some twelve million pounds.

Now where are these millions to come from? Who will find the gold that is to transform the Sudan from a useless waste into a profitable and smiling paradise? Certainly not Egypt. Mr. Hutton, when reporting on the possibilities of the country to the British Cotton-Growing Association, used these words:

"The reproach was thrown in my face that the British Government do not even pay for the repairing of the British flags which fly side by side

with the Egyptian flags on every public building in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Is it reasonable, is it fair, to ask the Egyptian Government to find the money to enable the Sudan to compete with them in cotton growing? Let us ask ourselves this question: Who is the individual who has found the greater part of the money for the Government of Egypt to hand over to the Sudan? There can be but one answer—the bulk of the money has been found by the struggling cultivator of the Delta, and he is the man who pays for the repairing of the British flag. Again I ask, is it reasonable, is it fair for a wealthy country like England to stand on one side and allow the burden to fall on the shoulders of the Egyptian fellahin? ”

I do not think that Mr. Hutton puts the matter fairly. He appears to suggest that Egypt will be asked to spend money from which no benefit will accrue to her. But this is not so. The development of agriculture and the consequent increased prosperity must result in the further reduction of the annual contribution, and ultimately the Sudan will become a source of revenue to Egypt. Assuming that the vision of a prosperous Sudan is

not only a mirage over the sandy waste, money spent by Egypt at this stage in irrigation and other works is merely an investment of funds of which the profits will, in due time, return to that selfsame fellah of whom Mr. Hutton speaks with such commiseration. But Egypt has other heavy expenses to meet at the present time. The Delta has to be drained at great cost, road-making has to be carried forward, and the public purse is none too full. Mr. Hutton is perfectly right in asking Great Britain to come to the rescue and to provide the funds so urgently needed for the Sudan. Both countries would reap the benefit of such an undertaking, and of the two partners, Great Britain is considerably the richer.

Much has been said and written on the subject lately, and it is only with diffidence that I venture to mention a few elementary aspects of the question in this chapter. I have noticed, however, that there is a tendency to speak of Great Britain and Egypt in the Sudan as if they represented two separate foreign governments in working partnership. But it should be remembered that the Sudan is not a part of the British Empire any more than Egypt is, and the administration under the



Condominium Agreement is based on the idea that Egypt and the Sudan shall benefit one another.

. . . . .

Mr. Hutton's scheme, however, is a more modest one than the development of all the possible cotton fields of the Sudan. He suggested that the British Government should provide a million pounds as a loan to the Anglo-Egyptian Government for building railways and for irrigation to begin with ; guaranteeing, on behalf of the British Cotton-Growing Association, the same sum for commercial development of the country. At the same time a further loan from the British Government of £200,000 was requested, to be spent in experimental and research work for the advancement of cotton-growing in the Sudan.

Now, what is the position at the present ? Granted that the commercial future of the Sudan lies in cotton, what are the practical difficulties, and how far have these difficulties already been met ?

Cotton can be irrigated by pumping, by rain or by flood. Pumping is too expensive, rain is uncertain, so that flood becomes the surest method of irrigating the fields. The proposal for the

Gezira at the present moment is to build a dam over the Blue Nile at Sennaar which will raise the level of the water in the river and fill a main canal and a series of branch canals almost all the way to Khartoum. To test the land, an experimental pumping station was formed at Tayiba in 1911, and the results of the year were excellent. Cotton has, as I have said, been grown for years in the Sudan ; the principal farms are those of the Sudan Plantations Syndicate at Zeidab in Berber Province ; of Mr. A. H. Capato and other smaller enterprises in Khartoum Province. Hitherto, however, owing to the water difficulty and the expense of pumping, they cannot be said to have been very lucrative. But as far as quality is concerned, Lancashire spinners could obtain no better.

The Gezira irrigation scheme, i.e. the dam at Sennaar and the canal system, will, in course of time, put 500,000 acres under cotton. Now there is one difficulty to be faced in this scheme as well as in every other undertaking in the Sudan. Skilled labour is almost always imported, and unskilled labour is difficult to get and ridiculously over-paid.

Take, for instance, the Gezira scheme, since this

is under discussion. The number of labourers required to work one block of thirty feddans is at least ten people, including women and boys. Hence if an area of 250,000 feddans only be taken (the whole plain is three million feddans), the number of people required for such an area would be nearly 100,000. Now the entire population of the Sudan, old and young, women, children and babies, does not reach the number of three million at present, and of these only a small proportion are workers.

Moreover, though the native can live in ease and luxury according to his standards on 3*d.* or 4*d.* a day, the rate of wages is so high that it ranges between 7½*d.* and 1*s.* At the experimental pumping station at Tayiba before referred to, as much as two shillings a day (ten piastres) had to be offered in order to procure labour, and even then it was difficult. And the more exorbitant the rate of wages, the scarcer labour becomes. The reason is not far to seek. The Sudanese are accustomed to slavery, that is, to forced labour. A system of wages has its advantages and its dangers. When the wage given is too high the native will only work for a time sufficient to provide him with



his year's expenses—not a vast sum—and that is all. The training and experience of generations are against the habit of acquiring wealth. In the old times, to be reputed rich was to invite the plunderer and the robber; hence the native developed the habit of earning enough for his needs and no more, as a wage-labourer; or of working because he must as a slave or a soldier.

The Belgians in the Lado were wiser than we; they never permitted the wages to be high. A story told by Lieutenant Grogan in his book is so illustrative of the attitude of the native mind towards wages, that I must quote it here from memory. A certain Englishman informed his cook that as his services for the past year had been satisfactory, his wages would be increased to three pounds a month. (He had been receiving £2 10s.) The man was more puzzled than grateful, and retired to think it over. It resulted in his coming to his master and demanding six pounds, owing him from the past year, his argument being that he was worth no more now than when he was engaged, so that the balance was due to him.

An attempt has been made to confront the difficulty by the formation of a Labour Bureau in

Khartoum and the provinces. But, although a step in the right direction, this system of registered labour has not proved successful up to the present. It has been truly said that the officials who keep the registers are the only people who work and the so-called labourers refuse to do a hand's turn. In many cases registered workmen have been sent out under contract, and then refused to begin work unless the agreed wages were raised.

When I was discussing this question with one English official, he remarked, "There is another solution, of course—why should we not import some of the thousands of the superfluous millions in India? They are industrious, the climate is suited to them, they are excellent cultivators, and they would make the desert blossom while we are waiting for babies to be born and for the lazy to turn over a new leaf." This suggestion may have been brought forward before and conclusively shown to be impracticable, but I mention it here for what it is worth. Chinese labour was imported into South Africa; why not Indian labour into the Sudan?

The optimist says cheerily, "Wait till the population increases. The children are swarming in

the villages like lizards, and a generation or two will work wonders." No doubt this is right. It is to be hoped and expected that the attitude of the native will change with time. The new generation, with no memories of the troublous times which have so effectually unsettled their fathers, may offer more promising material. But waiting is slow work, and if the cotton schemes and others are to be carried out to the best advantage, labour on a large scale will be needed before long.

On the other hand, it is possible that the difficulties have been exaggerated. The native is not absolutely blind to his own interests, and when he sees that a scheme is taken in hand in earnest, he may take a different view of the value of his own work. It is hard to persuade the native that industrial proposals are not mere "kalam," or, as we should say, "gas"; and until something tangible is before him, it is not easy to gauge his attitude.



## APPENDIX

### KHARTOUM BIRDS

FROM NOTES SUPPLIED BY MR. BUTLER

*SPARROWS*, similar to the English variety, but brighter and smaller, fly in and out of the houses in the town, and frequently build their nests in the rooms. *Yellow Sparrows*, with bright canary yellow heads and breasts, frequent the gardens and cultivation in flocks, but do not enter the houses. *Bulbuls*, rather smaller than a thrush, grey, with black heads, are familiar garden birds ; their notes are loud and cheery, if not very musical. *Sun Birds*, tiny little creatures with curved bills and long tails, flit about the gardens and feed on the flowers. The males are shining metallic rifle-green, with crimson on the breast ; the little females are dull greyish yellow.

Little *Bee-Eaters* love to perch on fences or telegraph wires, from which they glide off after passing insects, returning again to their posts.

*Hoopoes*, fawn-coloured, with cinnamon crests, and wings and tail broadly barred with black and white, flutter among the bushes, or walk daintily about, probing the crevices in the sun-cracked ground with their long bills.

*Senegal Turtle-Doves* coo in the trees; *Namaqua Doves* are abundant in the gardens, beautiful little doves with long tails like parroquets.

Fork-tailed brown *Kites* and black and white *Egyptian Vultures* soar and wheel overhead, or sit in rows on the sandbanks in the river. Along the river's edge *Pied Kingfishers* hover above the water like kestrels, or perch on some convenient stone or empty boat. Now and again a V-shaped flock of *Grey Cranes*, or of *Demoiselle Cranes*, pass over high in the air, announcing their approach with loud liquid notes. *Ruffs*, *Ringed Plovers*, *Godwits* and *Sandpipers* feed upon the mud at the river's edge. Small grey and white *Terns* wheel backwards and forwards over the river, with an occasional big *Black-backed Gull* passing among them.

*Colies* or *Mouse-Birds* fly about the gardens in little flocks, and feed on the figs and dates. They are queer little brown birds, with crests and very long stiff tails. They cling and climb about in all sorts of parrot-like attitudes.

Many familiar summer visitors to England may be recognised in Khartoum in the winter—*Swallows*, *Sand Martins*, *Redstarts*, *Lesser Whitethroats*, *Reed Warblers*, *Willow Wrens*, *Garden-Warblers*, *Chiff-Chaffs*, and so on.

On the open land near the town sandy-brown *Crested Larks* are met with singly or in pairs. Quaint little *Finch-Larks*, with chestnut backs and black heads and breasts and white cheeks and collars crouch,

on the ground, and *Yellow Wagtails*, *Pipits*, and *Short-toed Larks* feed in scattered flocks.

Tiny grey *Palm-Swifts*, with attenuated wings and tail, are plentiful, and fix their nests to the hanging, fan-shaped leaves of the Dom palms.



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